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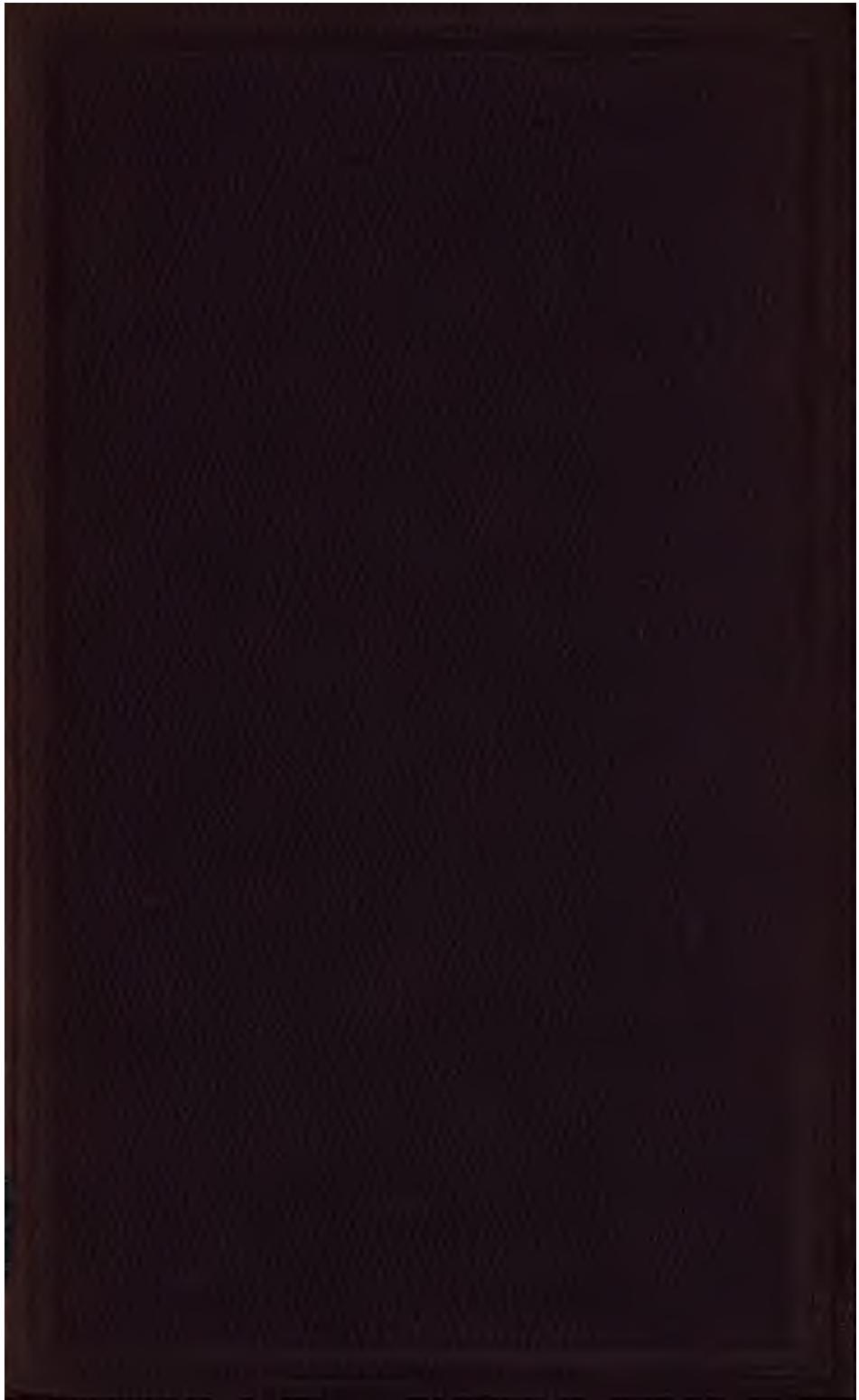
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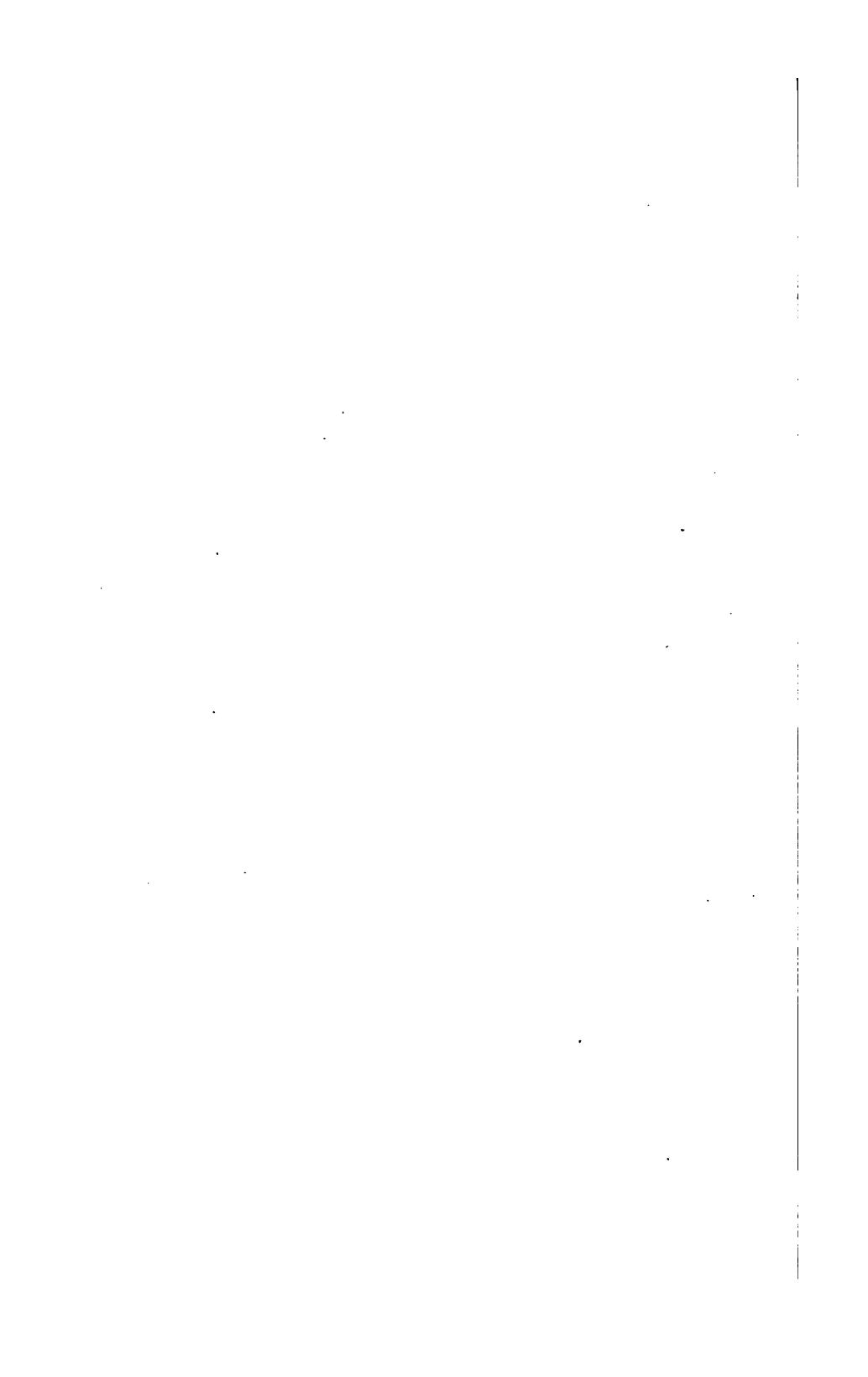




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R O S A G R E Y;

OR,

THE OFFICER'S DAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
“ANNE DYSART,” “HERBERT LAKE.”
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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CHAPTER I.

"I AM sorry for her, poor thing," said Mr. Turner, addressing his wife as she sat at work. "It is sad, I may say melancholy, for so young a girl to be left without her natural protectors, and it is only doing a Christian action to ask her here for a week or ten days. Besides she is a nice, ladylike girl. Her mother was a highly genteel woman—quite the lady, though very quiet and not much in her, but very well con-

nected. That Mrs. Clifden that Rosa is going to stay with, is a woman of family and property. Who knows if we are kind to Rosa but she may ask one of our girls to her place."

"Very likely, my dear. As you say, she is a nice, ladylike girl," answered Mrs. Turner, a weak-minded, good-natured, woman, who had always an implicit reliance upon the opinions of other people—of her husband, of course, more especially.

Mr., or Dr., Turner as he was generally called, was the principal medical practitioner in the village of Birkenside, in the south of Scotland. He was a portly, middle-aged man, with a fair, sunburnt complexion, light, short, straight, sandy hair, a nose like a button, and features otherwise of the commonest cast. His air and manner, though not offensively vulgar, were far from being gentlemanlike, having a tinge both of stiffness and pomposity. One would have been at a loss to say from his expression whether he was a kind-hearted or a worldly man. Perhaps he was both.

Rosa Grey, of whom he spoke, was the orphan daughter of a lady whose death-bed he had just attended.

Mrs. Grey had never been intimate with the Turners, and Rosa knew no more of them than might be gathered from exchanging morning visits about once in six months. The doctor's two daughters were older than she was, and looked down on her as "not come out," while she considered them and the whole family as commonplace. Now, however, in her loneliness she felt they were kind, and she was grateful for the invitation which offered her the companionship of her fellow creatures.

Yet when the parting moment arrived, Rosa felt a bitter pang at quitting the home where she had lived with the mother who appeared to her now as an angel. She wandered all over the little garden. The summer flowers were all gone; not even an aster or a verbena remained to bear witness of the beauty which had been. All had been laid waste by the storm of the previous week. The flower beds and the

gravel walks were strewed with mouldering heaps of leaves upon which the hoar-frost of the previous night lay yet white, damp and glittering, while those that had freshly fallen were driven rustling along by the keen wind, which blew now from a bright, cold, October sky. The storm was passed but it had left desolation.

And so it was too with the little world within the heart of Rosa Grey. Hastily returning to the little suburban cottage which had been so long her home, but which she was to quit that morning for ever, she visited every familiar apartment. But though nothing yet had been changed they seemed all to have about them a peculiar emptiness and desolation. And home to the heart of the youthful mourner came with a dread certainty and power the words—"Her place shall know her no more."

And in all the agony of a first grief, Rosa Grey lifted up her voice and wept.

For a long time she lay with her face buried in the pillow of the parlour sofa and wept passionately.

She was at last recalled to a consciousness of other things besides her own grief by the pressure of a rough but not ungentle hand on her shoulder, whilst a pair of piercing dark eyes looked keenly but not unkindly into hers as she raised her face from the pillow.

“Miss Rosa, hinny—c’way like a dear. Oh hinny—ye maunna bide here i’ the cauld. It’s fair nonsense, dearie ; I’ve made ye a sop o’ fine beef-tea.”

“Oh, Nelly ! I cannot come. My heart will break. I care for nothing in the world. I can never, never be happy more.”

“Hout, hinny—dinna say that. A bonny young lassie like ye to be speaking that gate.”

“Wait a moment—just one moment longer.”

“I canna wait. The guude beef-tea will be cauld.”

“Don’t speak to me of your beef-tea,” cried the girl passionately and impatiently.

“Deed, but I wull, begging yer pardon, my dear. It wull do ye a dale o’guude, and it wull

do nane to you or ony body else to bide here. Ye canna bring her back, hinny," she added in a softened tone, though something like a reproof was mingled with it, for Nelly was ever sternly sensible.

"I know that—I know that. I am so young to be alone, Nelly. Oh Nelly! They say life is a hard, terrible thing—and I am alone, alone!" Passionate sobs, violent trembling, accompanied these words.

"Weel, hinny—I dinna say it's no a hard thing whiles. I've been my lane a' my life. I never had nae mither. I've been at service sin I was twal year auld. But there's naething like setting a stout heart to a stey brae," said Nelly, drawing herself up with an air of determination.

Nelly was a woman between forty and fifty years of age, tall, angular, hard-featured, swarthy-complexioned, with sparkling dark eyes, and an expression penetrating, shrewd, resolute, and though by no means soft or affectionate, not unkindly. Beyond being able to read, she had

had no education whatever, but she had a large share of natural sagacity and an immense fund of practical energy. She looked indeed like one, who, to make use of the homely Scottish proverb she herself had just quoted, had "set a stout heart to a stey brae," and climbed it too. Rosa looked up to her as she spoke. Her words had not been without some influence. Rosa remembered then that her father had been a hero, and that she too had a battle to fight. Drying her eyes, and holding her hand tightly over her chest to repress her rising sobs, she followed Nelly out of the room. Arrived in the kitchen, she made an effort to gulp down the beef-tea, though to eat the toast which the considerate Nelly had prepared along with it, was impossible.

"So Nelly, you never had a mother?"

"Na, Miss Rosa. My mither deed when I was a bit toddling bairn, and my gudemither was bad till me. I wish her nae waur," Nelly continued, her face assuming a vindictive expression, and her eye sparkling with hate, "than to be as meeserable as she made me."

Rosa shuddered. "Oh Nelly!" she said reproachfully, "It is not right. It is unchristian."

"Bide till ye're tried, Miss Rosa. It's nat'r'l. I like them that's gude till me. I like you, hinny. I liked her that's gane, but I canna like a woman I ne'er got a kind word frae a' my life. Like her—I like her as I like puzz'en."

"But the Bible says 'Love your enemies.'"

"Very weel, dearie," cried Nelly, cutting her short. "Wait till ye have enemies, and see if ye can love them. Naebody that I e'er kenned loved their enemies, and I'm nae waur a Christian nor ither folk, though I dinna pretend to things I canna do and wunna do."

"I am sure, Nelly, if mamma had enemies she forgave them."

"I daresay that, hinny, but yer mamma was a saint. There's nane on us a' like her. May be I would ha been better had I listened mair on her; but there's nae help for't now, an' I'm nae waur nor my neebors," said Nelly, who, if she had any little qualms always soothed them by this, to her, satisfactory reflection.

"But Nelly," said Rosa, who, though she had been less intimate with her servant than is usually the case when a domestic has been so many years in the family, now clung to her as a friend —her only familiar friend in the world. "But Nelly, I hope I shall see you again. You will not forget me, Nelly."

Nelly was touched. She was not often touched; but it was not so much from any deficiency of sensibility, as because during the course of her lonely and loveless life, her affections had never been called forth by kindness and sympathy; but on the contrary had been chilled and repressed, till in self-defence as it were, she opposed a hardened nature to a hard world. She sought no affection from any one and she gave none, as no one sought it from her. She had been happier with the Greys than she had ever been before. They did not give her more work than she was able to do, they were satisfied with her performances, and they did not wound her pride by seeming to distrust her honesty or her truthfulness. More

than this Nelly did not expect or even desire from a mistress. Nay, she looked upon all efforts at greater intimacy on the part of superiors as savouring of the mysterious and indicative of some design upon her. She regarded the bond between mistress and servant as a bargain for service and honesty on the one side, maintenance and civility on the other, and a reasonable degree of accommodation on both. Nelly was fond of money and very saving—a habit which had been first fostered by the anxiety natural to a shrewd and prudent mind like hers of providing for her old age, but had now from long continuance become a love of accumulation. This was one of her chief interests in life—equalled only by the pride she took in performing her duties conscientiously.

But when she looked on the pale, sad, youthful face now turned to hers in its anxious appeal not to be forgotten, she was more moved than she had ever been before. She was of a little importance to some one. Her regard was really of some consequence to this young, warm-hearted girl.

“Forget ye, hinny—na, na, I’se ne’er forget ye. Ye’ve been a gude mistress to me and yer mither that’s now in Paradise.’ And with her rough hand, Nelly touched her young mistress’s dark hair, while with the other she brushed from her eyes the unwonted tiny drop of moisture which for an instant had dimmed their shining darkness. But the unusual emotion was quickly repressed ; to do Nelly justice, however, chiefly because she feared it might injure her young companion. She continued after a short pause in her ordinary tone of clear, steady rationality, yet with more softness than was common with her.

“I’m but a puir body, Miss Rosa, and it’s no muckle the like o’ me could do for onybody ; but ye’ve aye a freend in Nelly—mind that. I wad do mair for ye, hinny, than onybody I ken. I’m nane o’ yer flatteren folk, Miss Rosa, but I mean what I say.”

“And if I am ever a rich lady, Nelly, and have a house of my own, you must come and be my housekeeper.”

"That I will, hinny," said Nelly, glad to perceive from this speech that Rosa was not quite in despair since she could admit the possibility of future happiness, and for the moment dazzled herself with the idea of her probable future eminence; "but," she added, "it's time I'm thinking ye was gane doon to the Doctor's. Now bear up like a wuman."

And fearful of any fresh outbreak of grief, Nelly hurried her young mistress out of the house, promising to call on her on the morrow, "afore she gade to her cusens," where she was to remain till she got a cottage of her own, where she intended to live for the future and take in washing, or go out to work instead of going again to service.

And somehow or other, without quite understanding the way in which it was effected, Rosa found herself out of the house and beyond the railing, within which grew some now leafless lilacs.

Nelly returned to her solitary kitchen, and watched the retreating figure of her young mis-

tress. There was at her heart an unwonted void and an unaccustomed softness. She sat down and gave way to the gentler feelings and thoughts which the events of the last week had given rise. Wonderful to relate she sat thus, as she would have said *idle*, for about ten minutes, then rising suddenly and briskly, set about scouring and cleaning things for the sale with redoubled energy, as if to atone for her few minutes of unusual repose. With her return to her natural activity, her thoughts were restored to their more ordinary channel.

As soon as she had completed rubbing and polishing some tin and brass utensils, and had arranged them all neat and straight upon the table, she repaired to her own bedroom, which was next to the kitchen and there began rejoicingly to inspect and carefully to fold certain articles of wearing apparel, belonging to her late mistress, which Rosa had given her. "Rale gude folk," she muttered to herself, "rale free and just. I'll ha need of nae claise this three year—save a' my wage. I ha fifty pund i' the

bank a' honest gains. Puir Rosa ! I hope she'll ha' somebody to guide her, or she'll ha' the very een pickit out o' her head. She'll soon forget me, I ken that, and I'm a fule to heed whether she minds me or no : but she's a bit winsome lassie for a' that.

CHAPTER II.

FROM the hour of her birth up to the present time Rosa Grey had been the object of the greatest solicitude and the tenderest care that parent ever lavished on an only child. About ten years before the period at which this narrative opens, Rosa's father—an officer in the navy—had perished in a storm, after having gallantly and at the cost of his own life saved the lives of several other persons. Commander, or as he was generally called, Captain Grey, had been an excellent officer, sensible, prompt, energetic, and brave, ambitious of distinction, yet

nice in his efforts to obtain it. As a man, he was warm-hearted and cheerful, though quick-tempered; in person handsome, with a frank, pleasant countenance and a genial presence. He was much attached to his wife whom he had married for love, and a perfect worshipper of his child whom he would play with for hours together. Mrs. Grey's had been altogether a different cast of character from her husband's. His had been clever, practical, bold, and aspiring—hers was intellectual, timid and reserved. Her feelings were passionately strong, but shown only to a few and only in private; his were warm, prompt, and demonstrative. Mrs. Grey had loved her husband dearly, and if in her romantic girlhood her imagination had ever pictured a being more entirely suited to her, she had certainly never actually known one whom she thought his equal. While he lived, he was regarded by her as the kindest and truest of mortals, and after his untimely death her imagination invested him with the attributes of a hero. As such little Rosa had been brought up

to regard her dead father, and her childish memory seemed to bear witness of the truth of the representation.

Captain Grey had never been rich in the world's wealth and at his death his widow was left with only her pension. Mrs. Grey, English both by birth and education, had no near relatives—her nearest was a half brother, with whom she had never had much intercourse—though the little she had had was always of a friendly nature. Of her husband's family she knew still less. Of Scottish extraction, and highly respectable descent, but very poor, all his brothers and sisters had emigrated to America. At a very early age he had entered the navy under the patronage of a distant connection. His father dying shortly afterwards, and his mother having long been dead, he had hardly ever had any personal intercourse with his family, though a form of correspondence had always been preserved. At the time of his death, his eldest brother—a merchant in New York—had addressed a letter of condolence to his widow,

accompanied by an invitation to her to cross the Atlantic and to take up her abode near his family, with a very kind promise that she should receive the welcome of a sister, and every necessary assistance in the education of her daughter. But the timorous Rosa dreaded the long voyage and the meeting with so many strangers, and had besides a not ill-founded dread, that when they did meet they might not suit. She gratefully, but decidedly, declined the invitation, and in a year or two the correspondence dropped entirely.

From her half brother, the son of her mother by a first marriage, she also received a letter containing an offer to take her child to educate. Take her child! Mrs. Grey's blood grew chill with horror at the very idea. She wrote an indignant refusal, of which the consequence was an additional estrangement between her brother and herself; still, however, they wrote civilly to one another at considerable intervals, and when the former died the correspondence was maintained in the same strain with his widow, a

woman of large fortune, whom, however, Mrs. Grey had never seen.

Mrs. Clifden's (such was the name of her brother's widow) letters were a puzzle to Mrs. Grey. She could not make out her character from their tone, and not being a graphiologist, neither could she discover it from the mere form of the letters. Less characteristic handwriting than Mrs. Clifden's is certainly seldom seen. The letters were well-shaped but stiff, the strokes strong and dark, but utterly without boldness or originality. They looked as if they had been made with care by a person who wrote but little, and whose beau-ideal of penmanship was the style of a copy-line. The composition of the letters did not altogether suit Mrs. Grey's somewhat fastidious taste. True, there were no glaring grammatical faults, only such as are not uncommon among persons considered to be well-educated; but there was a total want of ease, grace, and euphony. Then as to the matter, one could not say that it was unkind or even cold; the expressions were all proper, per-

haps they were too proper ; yet somehow or other Mrs. Grey never received a letter from Mrs. Clifden without having an uncomfortable sensation, as if she had been out on a raw, sunless, February day.

She fancied involuntarily that she should not like her half sister-in-law, and then she reproached herself with folly and ingratitude in so fancying, for the actions of the latter like her words had never been otherwise than kind. Every year did she send presents of fruit, and game, and dress ; every year did she invite the mother and child to visit her at Riversthwaite. These invitations, however, Mrs. Grey had altogether declined, though she had meant at some future time to avail herself of Mrs. Clifden's offered hospitality. But Mrs. Grey had always shrunk from society, and since her husband's death more so than ever. Then Mrs. Clifden was wealthy and important, and entertained persons of consequence at her manorial residence of Riversthwaite Hall, and contact with such persons Mrs. Grey especially shunned, for she

was poor, proud, and sensitive. Her child and her books, flowers and fields, and the blue sky gave her more pleasure than the society of men and women. She became a sort of hermit, but was too gentle and too good to be a misanthrope.

Captain Grey and his wife had spent their honeymoon in Scotland—their first Sunday at a small and beautifully situated village some way south from Edinburgh. It was beautiful summer weather, and the green shady woods half hiding, half disclosing the picturesque ruins of a little abbey ; the cool crystal river winding round green meadows, or rushing beneath romantic cliffs, the rich uplands, the blue hills, made an impression on the lively imagination of the youthful bride which was never effaced. There had been spent the happiest days of her life, and thither she came in her widowhood with the precious legacy those happy times had left her.

For some months previous to her death Mrs. Grey had known her disease was mortal ; but it was only a few days before its fatal ter-

mination that she had found courage to tell Rosa the awful truth. From the time, however, that she became aware of her own state, the future of her own child, now almost a woman, pressed on her mind with the heaviest anxiety. Bitterly did she now reproach herself that she had made no friends for Rosa. How selfish she had been ! The gratification of her own inclinations had blinded her to the true interests of her child, and while she had fancied that child was dearer to her than herself, she now discovered that it was herself she had indulged. How she was to repair her error—her sin it now appeared, was her anxious consideration. After mature reflection she resolved on appealing to Mrs. Clifden. To her she wrote. Mrs. Clifden's answer was prompt and to the point.

She trusted sincerely Mrs. Grey was mistaken in her opinion of her own health ; but begged that she would not allow anxiety on her little girl's account to weigh upon her mind. As long as she (Mrs. Clifden) had a home, her late husband's niece should never want one.

Mrs. Grey's mind was partially relieved. She had, it was true, a slight sensation of the February atmosphere as she read the letter; but she strove to repress it as ungrateful, and returned an answer full of the most fervent thanks.

Mrs. Grey was a religious woman with a temperament leading her rather to the devotional than to the benevolent exercises of religion. Not that she was wanting in goodwill to all men; but in her nature this benevolence was rather passive than active. She was one of those who thought no evil, who hoped all things; but she was not one of those who go about doing good—at least when she did it, it was from a sense of duty purely, not from a love of the work. In the presence of her inferiors Mrs. Grey was never at ease. Shy with all the world, she was shyer with them, for this reason that she did not understand them. She feared to be too familiar, she feared to be too condescending. She attributed her own sensitive feelings to other people, and always

dreaded to wound where she wished to heal. Then she was poor ; she could hardly with the strictest economy make her slender income suffice for the wants of her daughter and herself —and she did not like to go to the houses of the poor when she could not relieve the wants she saw. It seemed torturing her own feelings to no purpose. Some ladies, indeed, as poor as herself she knew, could go and without gifts make their presence welcome and blessed by the kind sympathy, the word in season, the gentle reproof which reformed, the counsel which instructed, and the encouragement which kindled exertion and woke the love which endureth all things. Mrs. Grey admired such persons but she could not imitate them. She feared to presume, she feared to offend. She dreaded to do harm where she wished to do good. She was often miserable that she did so little good, yet how to do it she knew not. She had often tried and as often failed. Her servant and her child, at all events, it was her duty to instruct. With them she would begin accordingly. One

Sunday evening shortly after Nelly's establishment in her household, she glided into the kitchen for the purpose of conversing seriously with the latter. But Nelly cut her short; "I gang tell the Kirk, mem, and I gang to the sacrament. I'm an honest woman. I'm nae eye-servant, mem. I can say my carritch, and I read my chapter *ilha nicht*, and my judgment's nae waur nor ither folks. I'm nae waur than my neebors, mem, and aiblins better nor some." Mrs. Grey could have answered, "One thing lackest thou;" but she had not the courage. After this interview, which confirmed her in the opinion she had from the first entertained of Nelly's self-righteousness and pride, it seemed more incumbent on her than ever to warn her that she built on the sand; but never more did she dare to address her on the subject. True she read a sermon every Sunday night for her especial benefit, and chose often the morning and evening chapter with a view to meet what she believed to be the state of her mind. But all in vain. Nelly approved both of the sermon

and the chapters ; but as to dreaming of making any practical application of them to the condition of her own needs, it never entered into her imagination that there could be any advantage in so doing. It was right and proper in her mistress to read sermons and chapters—right and proper in herself to listen—that was all.

Even with her daughter Mrs. Grey was more tongue-tied than she wished. She taught her Bible lessons and hymns, and Rosa learned with ease and docility ; but her mother could never perceive that she regarded them in any other light than lessons or poetry, or occasionally in the same view as Nelly regarded them. Her feelings as she grew older were often touched with the pathos or the majesty of the Scripture narrative, and her understanding filled with admiration for its wisdom ; but that she understood the true import of its tidings, her mother never could be certain. When she spoke on these subjects, Rosa listened respectfully ; she thought her mamma a saint, and on one occasion she said so.

Mrs. Grey was then in her last illness. She shrank from the appellation in the sense Rosa meant it, namely, that her mother was distinguished by piety from the rest of her fellow-mortals. She eagerly, with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, disclaimed every superior goodness, and took the opportunity to explain the only ground on which she or any one could hope to be freed from the power of pride, selfishness, and worldliness. For once in her life, in the near prospect of death, Mrs. Grey spoke to her fellow-creatures with the ardour which had hitherto breathed only in her prayers. Nelly was in the room.

She listened to her mistress with reverence and awe, for she knew, though poor Rosa did not, that the former stood on the verge of the unseen world. From that time forth, Nelly too regarded her as a saint, and spoke of her as a Roman Catholic might speak of one who had been canonised. But Nelly continued in all things to go on in her own way, and was as certain as ever it was the right way for her at least.

On Rosa, her mother's unusual outbreak of fervour made a strong impression. Often during the period that the latter remained in the world, the subject was renewed. The ice once broken, the stream gushed forth in a living flood. The mother made a disclosure of her whole heart to her daughter; of her struggles, her attempts, her failures; her fervent desires, her agonising prayers, yet her weak deeds; her sinful timidity, her subsequent remorse; her struggles and prayers again, and finally her conviction of her own utter helplessness, and her humble trust in Him who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities; and who had at last given her power to speak as she had so long desired.

Like Nelly, Rosa was convinced that her mother was a saint, while she had long believed her father was a hero, and in her youthful enthusiasm she resolved to imitate them both. Somewhat of the character of both she had inherited. She had her mother's intellect and imagination, her father's ambition and enter-

prise, with a tinge of the sensitive pride of the former, and a touch of the impetuous spirit of the latter. But Rosa was only sixteen.

CHAPTER III.

Rosa found her sojourn at Mr. Turner's not of the most interesting nature. The family intended to be kind to her, but they did not understand how to carry out their intentions.

"Now my dear Rosa," Mrs. Turner would say, "do try to be cheerful, my love. It is very hard for you, no doubt, my poor child, to be left so young, but it is what many others have been, my dear. It is the will of God. I cannot tell what I feel for you, my dear, but still, submission is our duty."

It was, however, no want of good intention in Mrs. Turner that prompted such speeches. She was, on the contrary, anxious to console her young guest, and she thought that in such common phrases she took the most effectual way, and was rather surprised, and half inclined to suspect Rosa of obstinacy because she did not seem in the least consoled by her attempts, but, on the contrary, generally became more distressed and agitated.

The two Miss Turners were a few years older than Rosa. They were young ladies "come out," at least as far as it was possible to come out in the village of Birkenside, where even tea parties were like angels' visits, and balls were unknown. They had, however, each been once at a ball in a country town in the same county in which they resided, and they had each paid a visit in Edinburgh. On the strength of their superiority in years and their inexperience in life and fashion, they had always rather looked down on little Rosa, whom they considered to be "very school-girlish," and to have "very little

in her." They were good-natured girls, however, and felt sorry in a superficial sort of way for "little Rosa" when she lost her mamma; and when she came to their house as an inmate really took some little trouble to divert the grief which preyed upon the poor child. She had, besides, acquired some importance in their eyes from vague rumours which had reached them of the wealth and consequence of the relative who was said to have adopted her. Their method of consolation was quite different from that pursued by their mother, and with some persons it might perhaps have succeeded. They talked to her of the delights of a town life, and the glories of a ball, told her that in a year or two she too would come out, and perhaps go to a ball, finishing off by discussing the delightful manners and appearance of some of the beaux at the said ball, reporting some of their clever or complimentary speeches, which struck Rosa when she was able to listen to them as somewhat silly, though she fancied she must be wrong in thinking so, for Rosa was just at that time of

life when to *come out* is a grand object of ambition, and when imaginative and inexperienced girls are apt to believe society is what they wish to find it, full of heroes of goodness, genius, and devotedness. It is only by very slow degrees that a mind sanguine in its expectations, and timid in its judgment of others, learns to see society as it really is, and awakes to the disagreeable consciousness that instead of containing multitudes superior to their insignificant and ignorant selves, they are in fact beyond the mass in mind and heart. Thus Rosa, though a clever girl, and sensible,—at least sensible for sixteen—(and precocity in sense of some sorts is neither enviable nor loveable)—might at another time have found something to interest her—some food for her imagination even in the bald prattle of the Miss Turners; but at present it wearied and irritated her.

Her aching head, and worn nerves, and poor sad heart longed for rest, for the sympathy which could be silent.

“Does your aunt keep much company, Rosa?” asked Helen Turner.

"I am sure I don't know, but I fancy not."

"Has she a footman, a coachman, and a lady's-maid?"

"Indeed I cannot tell. I know nothing about her servants."

"I suppose," said Grace Turner, "you expect to be very happy at Riversthwaite?"

"I don't think I shall ever be happy anywhere," cried poor Rosa, beginning to weep.

"Oh! don't say so, dear," said Helen kindly, adding patronisingly: "I dare say she will get a governess for you, or perhaps send you to a boarding-school — there is very good fun at boarding-schools sometimes—and then you will come out and go to parties. You will forget Birkenside then, Rosa."

"I forget Birkenside!—never,—never!"

Riversthwaite was a favourite theme with the doctor also. Established in his easy chair one day after dinner with his "tumbler of toddy" by the fire, the lamp shedding a genial light on the dark, polished mahogany, he remarked in an emphatic tone:

"Very clever woman your aunt seems to be, Miss Grey,—capital letters those of hers—so well expressed."

Here Rosa would look up rather in surprise, partly suspecting the doctor of speaking in irony; but the expression of his countenance forbade the supposition. Too unsuspecting and inexperienced to guess the true motive of his opinion, she supposed he must be an illiterate man, or at least a man who had no appreciation of the merits of style. She merely answered, "Do you think so?"

"I do indeed—a monstrous clever woman—monstrous clever. I had a very nice note from her myself to-day, thanking me for my attentions to you, and enclosing payment in the most handsome manner for my little bill. Delightful woman Mrs. Clifden must be! Don't you think so, my dear?" he said, appealing to his wife.

"Oh yes, delightful—I should think so—certainly," she answered in her own drawling, helpless way, while more energetically, her daughters responded,

"Delightful!"

"You must be sure when you write Miss Rosa," continued Dr. Turner in his usual pompous style, to let us know the sort of place in which you are located. We shall be anxious on your account—we have almost got to consider you as one of ourselves."

"I shall certainly do so if you wish it—anything I can do—you are all very kind."

"Now dearest Rosa, pray don't cry, my love," said Mrs. Turner.

"And you may give my compliments—Mrs. Turner's compliments and mine to Mrs. Clifden, and say if she is ever in this part of the country, we shall be happy to shew her any attention or hospitality in our power," said the doctor, congratulating himself on a master-stroke of policy.

"Thank you," said Rosa; "I shall certainly do so. What kind people they are!" she thought to herself. "What a pity they are not a little more refined and intelligent!"

It was not without a sensation of self-

reproach that Rosa owned to herself she should be glad to leave the Turners. It seemed ungrateful but she could not help it.

The same post which had brought the letter of thanks and the bank cheque to Dr. Turner had also brought a short note to Rosa, likewise from Mrs. Clifden, fixing the day for the young girl's journey to Riversthwaite. There was no railway nearer to Riversthwaite than eighteen miles, and as the district was not very populous, no public conveyance at that season. Mrs. Clifden did not in a general way approve of young people travelling unprotected; but she did not see how it could be avoided in the present case. Dr. Turner or his wife would no doubt see Rosa into the train and she would have a servant and a conveyance in waiting at the station at which the latter must leave it.

Much as Rosa had wished to leave Birkenside full as it was of associations of past happiness and present sorrow, when the morning dawned which was to witness her farewell, her spirit seemed to faint within her. It was a raw, bleak morning

early in November One unbroken cloud of dull grey curtained the whole heavens. It was not raining, but the whole earth looked as if the deluge had just been withdrawn. Every tree, every shrub, every blade of grass was enveloped in a coating of moisture like an aggregation of tiny drops; the fallen leaves lay dank and moulderling beneath the chill, heavy dew; the air was perfectly calm, so calm that not a drop fell; not a sound was to be heard; the whole world seemed as if it had perished by drowning. Rosa shivered violently, as she mounted Dr. Turner's gig in which the servant was to drive her to the station, partly with the chillness without, but still more with the chillness within. Now that the parting moment had come, she was sorry to leave the Turners. They were the only friends she had in the world and they had really been kind.

"I hope, my dear Miss Rosa," said the Doctor, in his usually slow and emphatic manner, "that your feet are well defended. There is nothing of such consequence to the health as

to keep the feet dry and warm. I should like to send a good specimen of my skill to Mrs. Clifden. I have already written to thank her for her politeness and liberality. But you must not forget my message—my compliments and Mrs. Turner's too ;" then noticing that poor Rosa was weeping he broke off, adding kindly in a quicker and more natural tone, " Cheer up, dear Rosa,—you must come back and see us soon."

" Now, dear Rosa, don't cry, there's a love," said Mrs. Turner, looking very sleepy, " I shall always be glad to see you, dear. Good bye."

" Good bye, Rosa," said Helen, " we are all sorry you are going ; but we will let you know all we are about and how we are getting on with our new chair covers. We will write to you, dear, so don't be afraid we shall forget you."

" And tell us all about Riversthwaite," said Grace, who was the more ambitious as well as the more curious of the two sisters.

Rosa did not see her old home on her way to the station. She lowered her veil and cast down her eyes. She could not bear the idea

of seeing it in its desolation, but she felt as if by instinct when she was passing it, and she burst into a fresh gush of tears as she reflected that she was now going forth into the wide world alone.

CHAPTER IV.

Rosa Grey had an adventurous and sanguine spirit, and one sorrow, great though it was, had not had power to quench within her that faith in future happiness which is at once the strength and the folly of youth.

When she was fairly away from Birkenside, among new and strange scenery, her spirits began to revive, and the future in some measure to displace the past from her thoughts. She began to picture Riversthwaite and Mrs. Clifden to herself—to fancy her reception, the course of her life there, the adventures, the acquain-

tance she might probably meet with, and as her busy imagination wove this little aerial web of her destiny, gay coloured threads might have been found to mingle with the texture. And besides dreaming over what might *happen*, she began to think what she would *do*. The daughter of a hero, surely it was her destiny to accomplish something. She seemed to feel stirring within her some energy and enterprise. They could not be for nothing. For some good enterprise they must be.

Poor young Rosa! she had yet to learn the impotence of human strength, the deceptive nature of human motives, and, above all, that human beings cannot choose the materials of their own destiny. Rosa's impulses were high and generous; but she thought not solely of the work she was to perform, but of the praise and honour which thence were to redound to herself. Few persons are naturally more sensitive to the opinions of others than Rosa Grey. It would be curious were it possible to trace how much of what is named (or misnamed shall I say?) gene-

rosity, is derived from the love of approbation—and this latter quality is after all but an amiable form of selfishness.

It was long past mid-day when Rosa arrived at the —— station, near a little country town of the same name in one of the northern counties of England. A respectable, elderly manservant, in plain clothes, approached her as she descended from the carriage and began to look round her with a certain feeling of trepidation, and to have a sort of nervous dread that there might be no one to meet her. Having touched his hat respectfully, he enquired in a tone which was nicely balanced between the respectful and the protecting, “ Miss Grey, I suppose ? ”

“ Yes,” said Rosa, a little impressed by the grave, dignified-looking functionary.

“ My mistress’s love, Miss, and she hopes you will not find it cold in the car. My mistress has sent you a large cloak and an umbrella in case it should rain. My mistress desired me to say she was going out to pay one or two morning visits, or she would have sent the carriage. If

you are ready, Miss, we had better go at once, as my mistress must not be kept waiting dinner."

As he spoke he led the way to the car in which the porters had already placed poor Rosa's shabby little boxes, which her guide arranged with a glance of compassion.

The car was a two-wheeled conveyance constructed to hold four inside, and having an entrance at the back. The box was considerably elevated above the body of the vehicle, which was a handsome one of its kind. It was driven by one large, strong horse. A country lad was established on the box as driver. Seeing Rosa cast a glance at him, her first acquaintance, who had established himself inside the conveyance, but at as respectful a distance as circumstances would permit, said reassuringly,

" You need not be afraid, Miss. Thomas is accustomed to these roads from his childhood. The coachman and the footman have gone out with my mistress."

Rosa made no response, but her countenance must have asked a question.

"I am the butler, Miss. I have been in the service of Mrs. Clifden of Riversthwaite ever since she was married—indeed some months before. My name, Miss, is Watkins."

In reply to this intelligence Rosa made a slight inclination of her head. Watkins had made almost as imposing an impression as he desired. His youthful auditress was not naturally one of those whose souls prostrate themselves in the adoration of worldly pomp and magnificence, or whose veneration is chiefly excited by a fine house and a retinue of servants. In the abstract, it was the tendency of her mind as well as the bent it had received from education to respect worth, intellect, and energy, rather than mere material grandeur; but she had never hitherto been brought in contact with the latter, and now she felt a degree of nervousness at the notion which surprised herself. At a distance the idea of mingling perchance with a more cultivated and more refined circle than was to be met with at Birkenside, had excited her imagination; but now as the reality drew

near, the bright tints seemed to fade from the picture she had drawn, and to be replaced by an atmosphere through the medium of which all appeared vast, chilling, and oppressive. It would have seemed so much more *homelike* to have been going to some quiet little household than to the stately mansion of which Watkins seemed a sort of earnest. It was late in the afternoon of the November day when they drew near to Riversthwaite.

The day had improved since Rosa had left Birkenside. The wind rising had broken the heavy mass of cloud. The weather had been breezy with occasional short, heavy showers of rain. Now it was quite fair and the wind had again fallen considerably; but the magnificent masses of dark cloud yet floating on the clear, liquid blue, still seemed to betoken unsettled weather. The road had for the first eight or ten miles lain through what would have been in the summer time a pleasant agricultural country, varied by both wood and water, and though not hilly, yet diversified by pleasant slopes. Leaving this

fertile tract, it stretched for the next few miles over a wild moor-land district, bare of trees, and with hills on the horizon in the direction in which they were travelling. At last they entered a valley, through which flowed, or rather dashed a stream of some importance. The scenery now possessed considerable picturesque attraction, and was very interesting to Rosa, as she guessed it must be in immediate proximity to her new home.

As they advanced the valley widened, and the hills became wilder and more craggy, more especially on the side of the river on which the road ran. On the opposite side they were still turf, often belted by woods, with frequently a tuft or strip of pines surmounting some rocky precipice. The flat alluvial soil between the hills and the river had hitherto been mostly meadow land, and even at this late season was quite green.

Just where the valley seemed to have reached its maximum of width, stood at the base of a hill, the highest and most wooded within view,

a large, tall, grave looking mansion, built of brick, the red hue of which time had mellowed and sobered into a sort of rich brown. A long and narrow lawn, or rather wide grassy avenue, bounded on each side by elms and ashes of noble growth, led in a straight line the whole way from the house to the brink of the river, adding to the wild beauty which nature had bestowed upon the scene, a character that was both formal and impressive. On the outsides of these twin plantations there were no formal straight lines. On the one hand the wood stretched away round the meadow land in a sweeping course to the hills; on the other the trees seemed to detach themselves into groups and individuals, forming the noblest ornaments of a fine, but wild park, which stretched, as far as the winding of the valley would permit it to be seen, along the margin of the stream, skirting the hills which were more remarkable for picturesqueness of form and colour than for any imposing altitude. One of their most remarkable features was the number of water-

courses by which their surface was broken, and down which now rushed many a foaming torrent—in some places, where the rocky bed became precipitous, forming successions of small cascades.

As our travellers neared this mansion, Rosa regarded it anxiously. Could this be Rivers-thwaite? It seemed to her that it must be, when crossing a little old-fashioned bridge, with a low, thick parapet wall, the car seemed to be taking the direction of a massive iron gate, which standing wide open disclosed among the elms and ashes a dark, mossy, winding avenue.

The house fronted the south-west. Behind the low, craggy, furze-decked hills beneath which they had hitherto been journeying, and over a dark plantation of pines the sun now set amid red and stormy clouds, casting a crimson glow on the dark old hall, and its guardian woods and hills. It was unlike any scenery Rosa had yet seen, and though she had not time to take more than one glance, she never forgot that scene as it appeared with the red storm-clouds

behind the pine grove, lighting up the November dusk, and streaming through the bare November trees. But she was now whirling up the approach in which, though the leaves were thin on the trees, it was almost dark from the interlacing of the mighty boughs—and now emerging from the gloomy avenue, the car stood before the principal entrance, which was on the side of the house farthest from the river.

"This, Miss," said Watkins, as he prepared to descend, "this is Riversthwaite Hall."

CHAPTER V.

THE door was thrown open by a footman, and Rosa found herself in a large and handsome hall, with a tessellated pavement and two large windows of stained glass, through which the faint crepuscular light was still striving to penetrate, but was well nigh completely quenched by the blaze of a large wood fire which roared and crackled at one end of the apartment. The hall was furnished with massive chairs and tables in carved oak, an immense painting representing a hunting-field hung opposite the fire-place, over which were suspended the ant-

lers of a deer of gigantic proportions. Opposite the door a deep and spacious archway opened upon a corridor lighted by a lamp.

As Rosa reached this archway she was met by a person of whose rank at first she felt quite uncertain—not being quite sure from her manner and appearance whether she was a lady or a servant. She was middle aged, dressed in black silk, with a neat cap of white tulle, grave-featured, in short a very personification of respectability. She might either have been an upper servant or a poor relation. For the latter, however, she was too well-dressed. In answer to Rosa's half-articulate enquiry for Mrs. Clifden, she answered :

“ My mistress is dressing for dinner, but will be happy to receive you in her dressing-room.”

She then led the somewhat bewildered girl through a long corridor, up a spacious staircase hung with family portraits, through a similar corridor above, to a comfortable dressing-room, lighted by a bright fire and a pair of candles on

the toilet table. The apartment was not large but was handsomely though plainly furnished. By the fire stood a tall lady dressed in black velvet and diamonds.

Mrs. Clifden was a woman certainly above fifty, though how many years or how few it would have been difficult to guess. She had once been handsome, and was still a fine woman of her years. Her beauty, however, had never been of a feminine order.

Her features were regular but large, and without softness or mobility of expression, her eyes dark but unchangeable in their lustre. She did not look either silly or stupid; neither did she look witty or intellectual. A mourning cap, handsome and fashionable—yet not so fashionable as to impair its dignity—surmounted her hair, which was false, and a large shawl of the finest black lace enveloped her whole figure, partly hiding, partly revealing her still plump and well-coloured neck and arms, which had no other covering. Diamond ornaments sparkled on her arms and neck, and adorned the

large, plump, fair hand she extended to Rosa.

"How do you do, my dear?" she said in a clear, calm voice, not deficient in kindness, yet without much warmth; "I fear you have had a cold journey. I hope Watkins took great care of you. Your dinner will do you good. I will not keep you longer now as you must dress for dinner. What have you got to wear?"

Rosa enumerated her slender stock of dresses.

"Put on your bombazine with the low body, and dress your hair nicely. I like to see young people with nicely kept hair. I hope you always attend to brushing it properly. Mrs. Springer will show you your room. Be as quick as you can. Besides ourselves I have no one to dinner to day but the vicar and another gentleman. Ring the bell for Mrs. Springer, my dear."

Mrs. Springer, the same personage who had conducted Rosa to Mrs. Clifden's presence, now led her once more along the corridor, through one or two intricate, dark passages, up a back

staircase, through one or two more passages, into a low, large, bare, square room, neatly but poorly furnished. The small, old-fashioned tent-bed with scanty dimity curtains, the small chest of drawers of stained wood, the little square basin stand, the carpet which hardly covered the floor, were all somewhat in contrast with the apartment she had just left. Rosa felt this. She felt with a bitter sense of bereavement that the being who had ever thought there was nothing good enough for Rosa was no more. Her heart was blank and sad, and she could have wept bitterly, but Mrs. Springer was present, and while helping to unpack her trunks, was, she felt, stealing side glances at her. There was something to Rosa unpleasant in the cold glance of this woman's eye, which seemed to see everything and to show nothing. Rosa felt instinctively that she preferred Watkins to Mrs. Springer. The former, though decidedly patronising and more pompous, was more open and more demonstrative. Though the latter was perfectly respectful in tone and

voice, Rosa felt all the while that she was helping her to dress that she was criticising or sneering at her. Mrs. Springer had just fastened her dress when a bell rang.

"My mistress's bell," said Mrs. Springer.
"Can you dress your own hair, Miss? If not I shall return."

Rosa of course replied that she could dress her own hair.

Having accomplished this task, her next enterprise was to discover the way to the drawing-room. This, however, was not so easily done, and after sundry vain attempts, she finally lost herself amidst a labyrinth of narrow passages. She was wondering what she should do when, out of a room at some distance, came a person bearing a light, whom, as he drew near to her, Rosa knew in an instant for a certainty to be a gentleman. He was carrying a large book in one hand, and was passing her without even looking at her when she plucked up courage and asked him if he could point the way to the drawing-room.

"Certainly," he replied, glancing at her carelessly, "I am just going thither." Then adding, "Excuse me," he passed her, and at a pretty rapid pace threaded, like one familiar with the place, his way through the various passages till they emerged on the long corridor leading to the grand staircase.

"I know where I am now," said Rosa.

"Oh," answered her companion in an absent manner, as if he did not quite understand what she was saying, but felt himself called upon to make some rejoinder to an interrupting question. Rosa said no more, but followed her conductor in silence down the great staircase and partly along the lower corridor. There they encountered Watkins, who, with an air of intense respect to Rosa's companion, threw open the door of the drawing-room, which was quite lighted up by an immense and brilliantly blazing fire.

The drawing-room was at once a handsome and a comfortable room. Its appearance partook rather more of gravity and solid magnifi-

cence, than of grace or elegance. Yet in its own style it was in perfect good taste. The rich crimson damask draperies and the gold cornices corresponded with the soft, thick carpet of rich colours and magnificent pattern, with the dark inlaid furniture, the curiously carved cabinets, the magnificent old India china, and the heavy, handsome, high-backed sofas and chairs, the luxurious shapes and cushions of which were most inviting. The most modern and lightest parts of the furniture were the large mirrors, and the chimney-piece of white Carrara marble; but the massive frames of the former, and the rich elaborate carving of the latter were quite in harmony with the rest of the apartment. The roof was richly painted and ornamented, and from the centre descended an immense chandelier of elaborately cut crystal.

In a large easy chair sat Mrs. Clifden, but, though leaning back, in a dignified rather than in a lounging attitude.

" You are dressed in good time I see, Rosa," she said with stately approbation. " I do not

approve of want of punctuality, particularly in young persons. It is a want of respect to their elders and superiors. Sit down, my dear. There is a chair will exactly suit you."

The chair to which Mrs. Clifden pointed was a small one in the shape of a *prie-dieu*, the hardest, and straightest, and least adapted for a lounge of any in the room. It did glance through Rosa's mind that one of the softer and more luxurious ones would have been very acceptable after her long journey. But she seated herself as she was bidden, feeling a little chilled and overawed. Meanwhile, her gentleman conductor had lighted two of the wax-lights in the chandelier, and seating himself at a table immediately beneath them, had opened his immense volume and seemed to be immersed in its study.

"I hope you have found what you wanted my dear Robert," said Mrs. Clifden, with more softness in her tone and more affection in her manner than Rosa had fancied either were capable of expressing.

The taciturn gentleman looked up from his

book for an instant, and answered gravely, "Yes, ma'am, I have found it," and instantly fixed his eyes again on the apparently fascinating volume. The light immediately over his head and his absorption by his studies, gave Rosa a good opportunity of scanning his appearance.

He was young, not more than twenty-three or twenty-four, indeed had it not been for the sedate, thoughtful expression of his countenance one would hardly have supposed him so much, for his cheek was smooth almost as that of a girl, and there was a certain delicacy both in his features and skin which is seldom seen in the rougher sex except at a very early age. Not however that the features of the young man were beautiful, or even handsome; they were merely very well. His complexion was pale almost to sallowness, its pallor having a greyish rather than a yellow hue.

He had a square, solid, white forehead, the whole of which his soft, straight brown hair was parted to display. His eye-brows were fair and delicately pencilled; his eyes light and small

but thoughtful and well shaped ; his nose aquiline and decidedly long in proportion to the rest of his face ; his mouth almost femininely small but the lips thin, slightly compressed, and almost bloodless, its prevailing character certainly being severe and determined, yet strange as it may seem not altogether unmixed with an expression of something like sweetness. The figure of the youth was considerably below the middle height, though not so short as to be absolutely diminutive, very small and thin, but well, nay, elegantly proportioned He had altogether the air of one who had mingled with the world. His whole appearance bespoke a certain cold refinement.

Rosa having finished her survey next turned her eyes towards Mrs. Clifden. Those of the latter lady were fixed on the same object which Rosa had been contemplating—fixed, amid all the stateliness which never forsook her, with an expression of pride and fondness, which in Rosa's eyes made her seem more interesting than any circumstance had hitherto done.

"I could almost love her," said Rosa to herself, "if she would look so at me. But who can that grave, cold, unattractive young man be of whom she seems so fond?" Rosa's thoughts and the silence which reigned in the apartment were at last interrupted by the drawing-room door being thrown open and the footman announcing

"Mr. Blakeney and Mr. Wills."

Mrs. Clifden rose as these gentlemen were announced, but with characteristic stateliness did not advance to meet them, but shook hands with each in a dignified way, and then re-seated herself, making some trivial observations on the weather. Our studious friend meanwhile had closed his book, and also risen to receive the new comers, which he did in the manner of one who was at home. The tone of his voice was well modulated, clear, and easy, his address polite, but cold and indifferent. And yet while his manner was so polite, and without the slightest shade or symptom of affectation, there was something in it which gave the idea

of his considering himself superior to those whom he addressed. It was perhaps a shade of superciliousness, and yet if it were so, it was so slight that it would have required a very quick sighted person to have detected it.

Rosa meanwhile was regarding the guests with some timidity, beginning to feel as if everything at Riversthwaite must chill or overawe her. But there was nothing very awful or very remarkable in the appearance of the new arrivals. Mr. Blakeney, the vicar of Riversthwaite, was a good-looking, almost handsome young man, tall, well-shaped, with regular features, dark eyes and hair, lively, intelligent expression, and good address. His companion was middle-aged, that is forty at least, also tall, with a high, smooth, bald, empty looking forehead, thin dark hair swept up to cover as much as possible the baldness of the crown, good, but passé, expressionless features, and a somewhat military figure and address. Mrs. Clifden introduced Rosa to these gentlemen as—

“Miss Grey, half-niece of the late Mr.

Clifden." She had not risen from her seat to perform this ceremony, and ere Rosa had time to exchange salutations with the gentlemen, she added, "Ring the bell, Rosa."

The two stranger gentlemen, more especially the young clergyman, instantly started from their seats to anticipate her in the execution of this order: but he who seemed domesticated at Riversthwaite although he had now laid aside his book and appeared alive to what was passing, never stirred or showed by a sign that he thought there was any necessity for exertion. The bell being rung, Mr. Blakeney took a vacant chair by Rosa and began to converse with her in the ordinary style of attractive young men to attractive young women. And Rosa was pleased that the young clergyman seemed to think her so. Her poor bereaved heart craved for sympathy, and for the last hour all hope of it in her new home had vanished. She, too, was fond of admiration, and Mr. Blakeney was the sort of young man from whom most very young women, particularly one

situated as Rosa had been, where she had never had an opportunity of receiving any, would have been pleased to obtain it. I have called Rosa an attractive young woman, and this reminds me I have not yet presented my readers with a picture of her outward appearance, and it always seems to me to assist even one's idea of a person's character to know the face they bear to their fellow men. Every person's character is moreover modified by appearance, as appearance by character.

Rosa Grey when she was thrown alone on the world was just emerging from childhood into womanhood. Her mind, at least the more strictly intellectual part of her mind, was perhaps more advanced than her person. Not, however, that she had not arrived at full stature; she was already beyond the average height of her sex, but her figure, though well formed, was almost too thin for its height, and inclined to be angular from its extreme thinness. It was altogether that of an overgrown school-girl, which yet affords a hope that time may mature

it into beauty and grace, for its awkwardness was not that either of clumsiness of shape, or of vulgarity of motion ; but seemed chiefly to proceed from its having out-grown its own powers of management. In her low dress, though fresh and youthful in colour, her neck and arms were much too thin. Her face was interesting and in time might possibly be beautiful, for like her figure it too wanted rounding and filling out, and probably from this circumstance her features, though fine, were too high and marked for feminine beauty ; her forehead was lofty and severe ; her eyes large, very dark, without sparkle, but lighting up occasionally with an expression which was dazzling in its intensity. A Roman nose, a well shaped but too decidedly cut chin, and a small innocent-looking mouth made altogether an interesting and attractive face, which was shaded by one or two long dark curls. Rosa was both pleasing and lady-like, but utterly unfashionable and countrified in dress and style. There were, however, very few pretty girls in the Riversthwaite district, very few young ladies,

and it was therefore very agreeable to Mr. Blakeney to find one established permanently at the Hall, as that sex possessed great attractions for him, one reason of which might be, that he fancied *he* had considerable attractions for it.

At last the gong sounded for dinner.

"Robert," said Mrs. Clifden, "as there is no other lady I suppose you must take Rosa."

"Fortunate man!" said the clergyman with a smile regretful and complimentary, as he left the room last and alone, the elder gentleman having escorted Mrs. Clifden, who, though it was her own house, had walked first.

CHAPTER VI.

THE dining-room was at the other end of the corridor, and was consequently a pretty long walk. Rosa wondered if she should address her companion, but was deterred by the recollection of the ungracious manner in which he had met her advances on their first encounter, and his unencouraging demeanour in the drawing-room. Rosa was ambitious to please, but too proud to subject herself to the danger of a rebuff. She felt that her present companion, whoever he might be, had behaved to her in a manner which under the circumstances, was neither kind

nor polite. She wondered who he could possibly be, and whether he lived at Riversthwaite ; but supposed time would solve both these problems. She trusted he did not live there, for she felt she could never like him.

They were only about half way to the dining-room, however, when he accosted her.

"Are you very hungry," he asked, "after your long journey, Rosa?"

Much surprised was Rosa that he should address her by her Christian name, but he spoke exactly in the manner in which he might have addressed a child of ten years old. It was careless, familiar, absent, but not unkind.

Partly surprised and partly offended, Rosa answered.

"No, I am not very hungry—I am not hungry at all." And as she spoke she felt as if her rising tears would choke her.

They were now in the dining-room—a long apartment, with oak pannelling and roof, and hung with paintings. At one end was a large fire-place surmounted by a magnificent chimney-

piece of carved black oak, the carving of which ran up the whole way to the roof, leaving only a small oval space in the centre over the shelf. At the other end under an arch was an immense beaufet also of carved oak, and glittering with plate. Rosa had never before been in so fine a room. Everything she saw and heard only tended more and more to chill and depress her. Not that, as I have already said, Rosa's was a mind to be overawed by displays of worldly grandeur ; but all that she saw gave her an instinctive feeling that those among whom she was thrown were occupied chiefly by such things, and she felt keenly that such being the case they must despise her. Nay, she saw that they did despise her.

Educated as Rosa had been by a sensitive, high-minded and religious mother, she had imbibed the idea that though there were certainly in the world many foolish and wicked persons, yet that mind and principle were certain to meet with honour and distinction. And perhaps in the end they are, but it is only after

a steady perseverance which requires some firmer basis and surer reward than the praise of man. Rosa now discovered that even among those who profess and even believe they prefer better things, the god of this world is pre-eminently honoured. Poor Rosa ! she had intended to be heroic like her papa, devout like her mother, but in being so she fancied that others would have thought of her as she thought of the noble and devout. Should she have power to persevere unapplauded, unappreciated, and thus be really heroic ? we shall see—but meanwhile we must return to our narrative.

At table, Rosa found herself placed between her conductor, who took the foot of the table, and Mr. Wills. Opposite was Mr. Blakeney. During dinner there was little conversation. Rosa's companion was, however, polite and attentive to all—even to herself in a sort of way—that is, he noticed when she had nothing to eat, and remarking that she declined hock when it was handed round by the servant, asked her if she would prefer sherry. Still he never

addressed her, and when he spoke to others, never seemed to suppose that she listened to the conversation. After the dessert was placed on the table, in the midst of talking to Mr. Blakeney, to whom his conversation was chiefly addressed, he heaped his plate with fruit and then placed it before Rosa ;

“Here !” he said, and then without waiting for a rejoinder or even looking at her, he went on with his conversation.

“Thank you,” she said. “I do not want any fruit.”

“Take it, my dear,” said Mrs. Clifden loftily, “since Robert is so kind.”

“Mr. Clifden,” said Mr. Blakeney, “has only given Miss Grey grapes and a peach. Perhaps she would prefer some dried fruit.”

“Young people,” said Mrs. Clifden, “should not be too nice.”

But notwithstanding this sentiment, Mr. Blakeney handed the dates across the table to Rosa with some *empressement*. She declined them, however, but with a grateful smile and glance.

"Come, Rosa, you had better eat the peach, there is a good girl," said Mr. Robert Clifden, for such Rosa had now discovered was his name; and then, without waiting for an answer, he continued, "But as I was saying, Blakeney, I admire a reverential people as much as I hate a servile one. There can be nothing noble in the character either of a nation or an individual where there is no veneration, and at the same time there can be nothing noble where there is servility. Tyrants and slaves are the product of the same soil, and they are equally despicable."

As Robert Clifden spoke his usually pale, grave face was suffused with a slight tinge, and his light blue eye brightened with a sort of cold lustre. He spoke well and eloquently, but though Rosa so far approved of his sentiments, she fancied his eloquence was rather of the head than the heart. Even when he appeared, as now, to kindle, the flame was but a pale meteor glow rather than the genial warmth of a living fire. Rosa had conceived a prejudice against Mr. Clifden. As he finished speaking her eyes

turned from him to the vicar. Mr. Blakeney did not look so earnest as Mr. Clifden, but he looked more good-humoured. At present he seemed rather amused. His fine dark eyes shone, and his smiling mouth displayed a row of beautifully white teeth.

“Tyrants and slaves !” he said, “what terrible words ! are they not, Miss Grey ? But we have no such thing in this country.”

“Thousands,” cried Robert Clifden, “thousands who have it in their souls to be either or both.”

“Slaves,” said Mr. Wills, “are not so much to be pitied as one is apt to suppose. Some of them are very comfortably off. I don’t believe half the stories that are told. It is all a parcel of humbug. And even when they are ill-treated, these black devils do not feel it as we should.”

The very slightest expression of contempt curled Mr. Clifden’s lips. He answered ;

“When they are so used to it as to be content with their condition, and to have really begun to consider themselves mere beasts of burden, then it is that the work of tyranny is

consummated, and the victim degraded to the same moral level as the oppressor."

"Slavery," said Mr. Blakeney, "is a very sad and sinful thing, and though not expressly forbidden in Scripture, is certainly contrary to the spirit of Christianity—don't you think so, Miss Grey?"

Mr. Blakeney spoke as people speak when they are uttering truisms on a subject without feeling deeply, but as his face when he addressed Rosa was full of kindness, she felt very grateful to him ; and though what Mr. Clifden said, perhaps from the peculiarity of his manner, made more impression on her, she was confirmed in an opinion she had entertained from the first, that Mr. Blakeney was in all respects a very superior person. As the latter finished, Mr. Clifden leant back in his chair with a slight expression of displeasure in his face, which, however, soon vanished, and in a more subdued tone, and with that cold finished politeness of which he seemed master, pushed round the decanters and made some trivial remark to Mr Wills. Mrs. Clifden, with a slight nod to Rosa, rose and left the table.

Arrived in the drawing-room that lady produced some ornamental work, and motioning Rosa to her former seat began to ask her various questions—such as whether she could play on the piano, sing, dance, what languages she knew, if she could draw, or work worsted-work.

Mrs. Clifden's tone was condescending. She never spoke to Rosa as an equal, yet she meant to be kind and thought she was so. She never forgot the enormous difference between Mrs. Clifden of Riversthwaite Hall, and her young protégé Rosa Grey, and she fancied that she was all that was most encouraging and kind. When she had finished her cross-questioning, she continued :

“ You must practise an hour every day. There is an old piano in one of the garrets which I thought of sending away, but fortunately I have never done it, and if you are cold you can take a shawl. Young people ought to learn punctuality, therefore let from ten to eleven be your hour for practising every day. I shall

engage the schoolmaster from Ellerdale to give you lessons on alternate days in French and German, as these are considered necessary accomplishments now-a-days, and I hope you will take care to learn your lessons and be attentive. Of course you will keep all your own clothes in order? The rest of your time you may employ as you like, but I should recommend your doing some fancy work. Young people I know are often fond of idling and frittering away their time, but I trust, Rosa, to find you different, and always ready to be guided by persons older and wiser than yourself.

Rosa was saved the necessity of a reply by the entrance of the gentlemen. Mr. Blakeney instantly seated himself beside her, and began pleasantly to speak of the surrounding scenery. He then asked her if she did not think Rivers-thwaite a very fine place. She replied that she thought it the finest place she had ever seen. Mr. Blakeney smiled.

"Do you know the first time I came here I felt quite awed by these rooms!" Rosa confes-

sed she did the same. Mr. Blakeney found in this confession a pleasing congeniality of sentiment.

"At home," he continued, "my home is in Lancashire, or rather I should say *was*, for I am probably established at Riversthwaite for life, we have a large house, but quite in a snug, moderate, unceremonious style, which, *entre nous*, I much prefer to magnificence and state. My mother is of all the people I ever knew the one who has everything in the best and most comfortable order."

Rosa was interested to hear of anybody's mother. She asked eagerly—

"Are you very fond of your mother?"

He smiled again.

"Very. You would like her I am sure if you knew her, and I hope you may some day. I hope in the summer time she will pay me a visit at my little parsonage."

"I should like to see her excessively," was poor Rosa's rejoinder. Again her companion seemed pleased, and spoke next of his brothers

and sisters. Rosa was much interested, and ere their conversation had come to a conclusion she had been made acquainted with all the members of the Blakeney family, and ascertained that her present companion, the Rev. Harold Blakeney, was the second son. She had received also a slight sketch of the genealogy of the Blakeneys.

Mr. Blakeney the elder was the son of an army officer, descended from a respectable country family in one of the midland counties. He had early in life entered a mercantile firm in Liverpool, and as junior partner been sent out to the United States. There he had lived for many years. His wife was an American lady, and all his children had been born on the other side of the Atlantic. He was now the head of the firm, and had several years ago returned to his native land. A year or two previous to the commencement of my narrative he had purchased a residence in the immediate neighbourhood of Liverpool, where he now resided with his family. His eldest son followed his own calling, and had

already been made a partner. His second, Harold, our acquaintance, had studied at Cambridge, and had now for some years been ordained. He had been one year vicar of Rivers-thwaite. He was, as I have said, a young man of prepossessing manners and appearance. The ordinary routine of parish duty he fulfilled with exemplary punctuality and diligence, and so as to satisfy Mrs. Clifden, who was a lady of the most rigid propriety, and who, while she severely reprimanded all extremes of zeal and enthusiasm, all originality and ardour of every kind, and whose favorite text was, "Let your moderation be known unto all men," yet approved of the most extreme precision and formality in all outward performances.

Mr. Blakeney's reading was also greater than that of the one or two squires and their families who composed the list of the Riversthwaite visiting circle, and Mr. Robert Clifden, who was a reading man, preferred his conversation to that of the other neighbours. Even Mr. Blakeney, however, Mr. Robert Clifden thought not much

of in an intellectual point of view. Their tastes in reading were totally different. Both, however, were possessed of a wonderfully good opinion of themselves, at least as compared with others. Mr. Blakeney was much fonder of the society of women than Mr. Clifden. He was a person who sought sympathy—whose own thoughts and pursuits were not sufficient for himself—a character which generally appears the most amiable. He liked the admiration of women for his fine person and agreeable manners, and he liked the feeling of mental superiority their conversation gave him. Thus while he did not like a very clever woman he yet did not care for a stupid or a foolish woman. He liked a woman intelligent enough to appreciate *him*.

Robert Clifden on the contrary preferred the companionship of a mind equal to his own, and that he thought was not to be found among the other sex. He did not care so much for sympathy as Mr. Blakeney. He was more self-centred, and more reserved.

Mr. Blakeney had been much taken with the appearance of Rosa Grey. He was one of those men who admire very young women. Her youth and artlessness and naiveté appealed to all that was best in his nature and perhaps to something that was not best. He had never before spent so pleasant an evening at Rivers-thwaite, and regarded the arrival of Rosa Grey as the most agreeable incident which had taken place since his establishment in the neighbourhood, which he had long considered a very dull one.

The entrance of the servant with tea put a stop to his conversation with Rosa, which had been quite a tête-à-tête. Mrs. Clifden now stepped with dignity from her tall chair by the fire-side to the tea-table, where, in a slow and stately manner, she began to make tea, displaying as she did so, but with no vulgar ostentation, her large white arms and smooth jewelled fingers.

"When you are a little older, Rosa," she said, "you shall pour out tea."

"I can easily do it now, ma'am, if you wish."

"No, no, not yet. You must wait a little before you obtain such promotion." Rosa drew back chilled again. It was something in Mrs. Clifden's manner rather than in her words which always disheartened her. As soon as the tea was poured out, the servant by his mistress's order left the room. Rosa was seated near the tea-table. Mr. Clifden and Mr. Wills were at another table near, looking over some prints. Mr. Clifden who was fond of tea shortly brought back his cup empty.

"I'll thank you for another cup of tea, Aunt," he said.

"Aunt!" repeated Rosa to herself. "He is Mrs. Clifden's nephew then."

Leaving his cup with his aunt Mr. Clifden returned to the other table to the prints. A few seconds after the former called out,

"Robert, my dear, your tea is ready."

Robert turned round, and seeing Rosa between his aunt and himself, said, in an easy, careless tone :

"Just hand me that cup of tea, will you, Rosa?" As he spoke his aunt held the cup in the direction of Rosa, as if she saw nothing but what was polite and proper in the request. Rosa could not reach it without rising, which she was obliged to do, colouring at the same time with mortification and displeasure. Mr. Clifden took the cup without looking at her, saying hastily, as if from the force of habit, rather than from the perception that any service had been rendered on that special occasion,

"Thank you."

While this little scene had been passing, Mr. Blakeney had been at the other end of the room, inspecting a curious drinking-cup, supposed to be Roman, which a labourer had lately dug up in the Riversthwite grounds, and of which Mrs. Clifden had been speaking at dinner. Mr. Blakeney was not much of an archaeologist. He did not care much about the drinking-cup, and had merely gone to look at it at Mrs. Clifden's request. He had not, however, at all noticed what had passed in his absence. He now

returned, and seating himself next Mrs. Clifden, began to converse about parish matters. As soon as the tea-things were removed, the latter, addressing Rosa, said,

“Open the piano, Rosa, and let me hear you play.”

As she spoke Mr. Blakeney rose and hastened towards the instrument.

“Thank you, Mr. Blakeney,” said Mrs. Clifden, “you need not have taken so much trouble.”

“The trouble is a pleasure,” said Mr. Blakeney gallantly, with a smile to Rosa, who did not however approach the piano.

“The piano is ready, Rosa,” said Mrs. Clifden, “why don’t you go, my dear.”

The tone of Mrs. Clifden’s “my dear” to Rosa was very different from that to Robert. In the one case the word seemed to have a real meaning, in the other to be a mere expletive.

“If you please, ma’am,” said Rosa, “I would much rather not play at present. To-morrow if you wish—”

"Nonsense, Rosa. Young girls ought early to be accustomed to play in company. What is the use of their music if they cannot? Go my dear at once," she said in a calm, stately way, which seemed to leave no room for resistance. Poor Rosa obeyed.

She did, however, feel a little nervous, in that strange room, and among persons whom she had never seen in her life before, the manners of most of them, moreover, being not of a nature to inspire confidence. But the chief cause of her unwillingness was the recollection of the past which crowded on her. Her mother had taught her music, and she knew not a single air which was not associated with the departed. For so young a girl, however, Rosa, as we have already seen, had considerable self-command. She made a great effort. When she had finished one or two airs, Mrs. Clifden remarked in a tone which she meant to be encouraging,

"Very well, Rosa. You will do in time. Of course you can have had no great instruction. Who was your teacher?"

Poor Rosa could stand no more. Quite overcome by physical fatigue, harassment of mind, and a heavy aching sense of bereavement and desolation, she could not answer with composure Mrs. Clifden's question, and as her lips trembled to form the necessary words the tears rushed in a flood to her eyes, and hiding her face in her handkerchief, her frame shook with the sobs she in vain tried to stifle. The whole party looked in astonishment. Mr. Blakeney, who had stationed himself beside her as gentlemen do near a lady who is playing, whispered kindly, and in a tone of real sympathy,

“What has hurt you? What can I do for you?”

“Nothing,” sobbed poor Rosa; “you are all strangers and I feel so sad; but—thank you.”

“Poor girl,” said the young clergyman kindly, as her words and her deep mourning dress revealed partly her desolate situation.

“Rosa,” said Mrs. Clifden in the cold, dignified manner which never varied save when she addressed her nephew, “it is very foolish to give

way in this manner. People cannot learn too early to control their feelings, particularly in company. I do not wish to be harsh with you, my dear, but I think you had better leave the room till you are more composed, or rather go to bed at once. Early hours are best for young people in every point of view. Good night, my dear."

Mrs. Clifden did not speak harshly. She spoke almost kindly, yet like one who thought she had some just cause for displeasure, and was showing great forbearance. Rosa got up from her seat glad to obey her last command. But she had scarcely risen, when Robert Clifden addressing her, said kindly, with the sort of kindness a humane man might show to a wounded bird,

"Sit down till the servant brings a candle. Poor thing, I am afraid you are sadly tired."

As he spoke he rang the bell and then returned to his seat. Mr. Blakeney meanwhile continued to stand by Rosa who was now more composed.

"Time," he said kindly, "soothes all sorrows." Then he added, "We have trespassed too much on your good nature."

Rosa only answered by a glance. The dark beauty of her soft, lustrous eyes was not lost on Harold Blakeney, nor the artless, grateful look. The image of Rosa Grey oftener visited his thoughts for the next few days than that of any other person.

In the meantime the candle had arrived and Rosa had contrived to tread her way up to her scantily furnished room. Here she threw herself on her knees and passionately besought to be taken to her mother; and then she remembered how that beloved one had told her once, in all her sorrows to pray for submission and faith, but this Rosa's poor passionate heart refused to do now, so she rose and hastily went to bed without the comfort these only can bestow.

And with the thought of the fond, fond love lost for ever, blended the bitter feeling of disappointment as the first dream of sanguine youth dissolved away in harsh reality. To be a heroine at Riversthwaite, to be a saint like her mother anywhere, seemed to Rosa Grey now quite impossible. At Riversthwaite there appeared to her

no opportunity to be either, and in proportion to the sanguine vanity of her expectations was now the depth of her depression. Poor child! she did not yet know the meaning either of the one term or the other. She might perhaps, however, though she knew it not, have got her first lesson to night.

Amid all the bitter desolation and despondency of her heart, she had but one pleasant idea—and that was of the young clergyman. She was sure to see him again, and it comforted her somewhat to remember this, and to remember also he had promised she should see his mother and sister. With the pleasant, dark eyes and friendly face of Harold Blakeney floating before her mental vision, yet becoming ever more and more confused, and blended with less pleasant images, Rosa at last slept for the first time at Riversthwaite.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the depression of her spirits Rosa slept well. The various fatigues of the day, bodily and mental, had worn her completely out; she rose rested and refreshed. Her spirits also had revived. Courageously she reviewed her situation, and in the morning light it did not seem so hopeless as it had done overnight. It might turn out better than she expected. Perhaps when Mrs. Clifden knew her better her manner might be different. She could love, for she loved her nephew, and in time she would probably love her also. Rosa

was dressing her hair before the looking-glass when this idea passed through her mind, and the reflection it gave back made her think that in appearance, at least, she was as loveable as Robert Clifden. "And I am not stupid, or obstinate, or bad-tempered," thought Rosa, "and I should love her so if she would only love me, and not treat me in that cold and distant way. I wonder what makes her love Mr. Robert Clifden so much. He does not seem to have so many excellent or fascinating qualities."

Poor, simple-minded Rosa! She did not yet know that there is a class of people, whose love is bestowed altogether irrespective of the qualities of the object to which it is given.

Mrs. Clifden loved her nephew simply because he was her nephew, and in virtue of his being *her* nephew and *her* heir, as a matter of course he was endowed with every talent and grace befitting his station.

Rosa having completed her toilet, and finding by her watch that it yet wanted a quarter of an hour of breakfast-time, went to the window to

survey the prospect. It was an interesting one.

The window from which Rosa looked was small and square, consisting of four panes of glass, high above the earth, and immediately under the roof. It commanded a view of the broad grassy avenue with its guardian rows of mighty trees. The frosty grass now glittered in the sunlight, and beyond it the mountain stream dashed past with the cold flash of steel. The fantastic crags on the opposite side rose clear and sharp. There was no wind, but the withered leaves which yet remained on the elms (those on the ashes were gone long ago) floated one by one softly and slowly downwards. Over the whole scene brooded the genius of silence and solitude. There was not even the summer hum of insects, or the soft, low murmur of the thick, leafy woods. On the distant hill-top, motionless and distinct, stood out in the morning atmosphere the dark pines, behind which the red clouds had flamed so fiercely the night before. At first Rosa thought she had all the

serene, cold beauty of the morning to herself ; but after she had gazed for some seconds, her eye fell at last upon a slight figure by the wood near the river, which the distance and the tall trees made at first to seem almost diminutive. As it drew nearer Rosa perceived that it was Mr. Robert Clifden, who was walking slowly, and with the absent look of a person in a fit of mental abstraction.

The mental abstraction of Mr. Robert Clifden, a physiognomist would have said from his aspect was not that of a dreamy, poetical mind, unable to resist the fascination of its own reveries. It seemed that rather of a severe and resolute thinker, who by an act of the will turns his thoughts inwards. Young as the face of Mr. Clifden was, it was a thoughtful and determined one, it was the face of one who was his own master ; few of the weaknesses and follies of youth were to be read of in that face, and few too of its fascinations. Rosa thought it a cold, almost a repulsive face, yet its repulsiveness arose rather from the want of attraction than from anything

positively disagreeable either in the features or expression. By daylight, it looked even more pale and delicate than the night before. Rosa wondered if he were ill. Yet his step had too much elasticity, his eye was too clear and keen for delicate health. As Rosa saw him now, the fancy struck her that he looked like the spirit of the season come down on earth in visible shape,—cold, calm, with a certain share of beauty, yet ungenial, wintry, and blighting.

Rosa now went down stairs, finding her way more easily than on the previous night. In the lower corridor she encountered Watkins.

“Good morning, Miss. I hope you are rested Miss, after your journey,” he said speaking with his former mixture of respect and patronage. “This way, Miss,” he continued; “this is the breakfast-room; my mistress always sits here of a morning.”

As he spoke he ushered Rosa into a pleasant, cheerful apartment, furnished with lively green curtains and hangings, the windows of which were in the end of the house, and looked out on

the elm and ash woods which swept round it, and in which had been cut an arch affording a glimpse of the park beyond and of a wild ravine among the hills. Down the ravine came tumbling and foaming a wild mountain rivulet or beek as it is called in that part of the country, on its way to join the large stream. On the slope of the hill in the distance Rosa caught a glimpse of one or two deer which seemed to belong to a herd, the rest of which were hidden by the wood. Altogether the picturesque seclusion and wildness of the scene charmed her, and she regarded it for some seconds in admiration. The room itself too was less stately and less magnificent than those she had hitherto been in. It had more the look of unostentatious comfort and quiet home occupation.

"Nice snug little room this, Miss," said Watkins, who had entered after her. "Not so andsome by a long way as the others to be sure, but a nice little room enough for one or two." As he spoke he looked round the apartment which might be about twenty-two or

twenty-three feet square, as if one had barely room to turn in it, with a glance partly admiring, partly contemptuous. Then noticing that Rosa had been looking out of the window, he added, "Very pretty view, Miss. We have fine scenery here, Miss, if you are fond of scenery. You will find this a pleasant place, Miss," he said encouragingly. Watkins, though a vain and a pompous was a good-natured man. He had seen poor Rosa go to bed in tears the previous night and he felt sorry for her and desirous to cheer her, at the same time that he wished to impress her with an idea of his importance and of the magnificence of Rivers-thwaite on which he felt that importance greatly depended. Rosa partly guessed his motive and was grateful for it, while it made her feel a little awkward. She did not know how to combine in her manner gratitude for his kindness, with the dignity she felt she ought to maintain in his presence as a servant. It was more natural to Rosa, however, to be grateful than to be dignified, at least in one sense of the word.

"Thank you, Watkins," she said, colouring a little with the embarrassment I have described.

A light yet firm tread was now heard outside.

"Here is Master, I think," said Watkins, his familiarity suddenly disappearing, while he left the room in a deliberate, pompous manner. In the meantime, Robert Clifden had entered by the middle one of the three windows, which opened upon a strip of lawn between the house and the wood. He seemed a little surprised to see Rosa there. He had in fact forgotten her existence for the moment. He had been working out some speculation in his own mind and would not have entered the breakfast-room if he had expected to find it tenanted, more especially by a stranger or a young girl. Robert Clifden did not like strangers, women, and children, that is to say he did not like their presence. He bore them no ill-will.

But though with a considerable share of confidence in his own abilities and never at all

diffident to declare his opinion, Robert Clifden had a peculiar kind of shyness by which he was most afflicted in the company of those whom he regarded as his inferiors. He felt as if he did not know what to say to them. It was the sort of awkwardness most persons feel when they are placed in a situation they are not much accustomed to and do not quite understand.

"I suppose I must speak to that child," he thought to himself as he perceived Rosa. "What a bore! What in the world am I to say?" Here remembering her fatigue and distress of the previous night, he hailed it as a good idea.

"Good morning, Rosa. Better this morning I hope."

"Thank you, Mr Clifden. I am quite well," she answered coldly and with some dignity.

But her coldness and dignity were equally lost on the object towards which they were directed. He walked to a distant window, thought

of addressing Rosa again, but could think of nothing to say. Meanwhile the chain of his speculation had been broken, and he could not then find again the lost links, so after having walked once or twice up and down the room in an absent way he took up a newspaper which was lying on the table and began to read, only looking up in the course of a few minutes to say,

“Shut that window, will you, Rosa. There is a terrible draught.”

Now though Rosa was much nearer the window than Mr. Clifden, still she had to rise to shut it, and her cheek burned, and her heart swelled with indignation at the want of respect she thought the request indicated. Again the bitterness of dependence entered into the soul of Rosa Grey. She had just returned to her seat, when Mrs. Clifden, followed by a servant with the tea equipage, entered the room. Mrs. Clifden’s first salutation was to her nephew, whom she kissed on the forehead—a salute which he received with the most perfect cold-

ness and unconcern, and as if it were part of the regular routine of the day, saying merely,
“Good morning, ma’am.”

Mrs. Clifden bestowed no further caresses nor uttered any affectionate words, but her dark and usually passionless eyes shone for a moment with the same look of fondness Rosa had already seen in them when they were fixed on her nephew. There was, however, no corresponding expression in his. He remained impassive under the glance as under the caress, and his aunt did not seem to expect he should have done otherwise. She then turned to Rosa, having recovered her usual dignified immobility of feature and mien.

“I hope you have got over your fatigue, Rosa. And now my dear let me give you some advice. Never give way as you did last night—it is quite babyish; you must learn to control your feelings. It is a lesson which cannot be acquired too early. Persons of good taste and good education never make scenes. It is altogether unlady-like and vulgar. I felt quite ashamed of you last night. I desire there may be no repetition of the same thing.”

Rosa's heart was full to bursting ; but it would have broken before she would have shed another tear. She sat pale and still, while Mrs. Clifden spoke, and when she had finished made no answer either by word or gesture. The latter took her silence for submission, and was perhaps better pleased by it than any answer. She fancied Rosa Grey must stand much in awe of her, and Mrs. Clifden liked nothing better than that persons should stand in awe of her. Robert who had laid down his newspaper on the entrance of his aunt, and who had been listening to her harangue to Rosa, attributed the silence and the fixed expression of the young girl to the same cause.

"I am sure," he said with a sort of icy gentleness, "Rosa will not cry so again, will you Rosa ? You were only tired, were you not ? "

As he spoke he seated himself at the breakfast-table. Rosa hardly knew whether or not his speech was meant for a banter. But at any rate it appeared to her ill-bred—almost insolent that he should have interfered in the matter at

all. If she had been cruelly hurt by Mrs. Clifden, she was angry and indignant with him, and her anger and indignation increased when he added,

“ Come to your breakfast, Rosa, there is a good girl. Here is some excellent marmalade and very good eggs. If you like poultry you shall have a pair of Cochin China fowls of your own to console you, so cheer up.”

A pair of Cochin China fowls to console her ! Such a consolation for sorrows like hers ! but Mr. Robert Clifden was mocking her she felt certain, and how unmanly and ungentlemanly in him to behave thus to a poor friendless orphan. She thought him the most heartless person she ever knew ; and did not accept his invitation to seat herself beside him, even though he had loaded her plate with rolls and marmalade.

“ Come, Rosa,” said Mrs. Clifden, “ sit down beside Robert since he is so kind as to ask you.” And Rosa had no alternative but to obey. Robert in the meantime had fallen into a reverie again, and the breakfast passed off silently. After

breakfast Mrs. Clifden dismissed Rosa to practice, and Mrs. Springer, by her mistress's desire, conducted her to the apartment containing the piano devoted to her use. It was on the same floor as her own room and was, in fact, a sort of lumber-room, containing various old chairs and tables of different patterns, some empty boxes, an old time-piece, a broken desk, and the piano. There was no carpet on the floor, but the room, considering the use to which it was appropriated, was wonderfully free from cobwebs and dust.

"I hope you'll find the piano in tune, Miss," said Mrs. Springer in a tone under the apparent gravity of which there was a covert insolence, which seemed to Rosa to be the style of the whole household with the exception of Watkins, and even he was rather more familiar than was consistent altogether with the respect due from a servant. Poor Rosa! Her yoke of dependence galled her severely. Already she began to think of throwing it off and going forth into the world to do for herself. But she

was so young, so very young. "Oh!" she thought, "if I were only twenty." And the bitter tears began to flow as she considered the time that must elapse ere she attained that advanced period of life. Time seems so interminable in prospect at Rosa's age.

It was very cold in the lumber-room, and the piano was a wretched one. Rosa fetched a shawl from her own room ; nevertheless ere her hour was ended she was blue with cold. On returning to the breakfast-parlour, she found Mrs. Clifden seated near the fire working a pair of slippers for her idol—Robert. That gentleman himself was not present.

"Bring me a foot-stool, Rosa, and my pocket-handkerchief, and then hold those worsteds while I wind them." Rosa obeyed these commands, her aunt keeping her standing all the time she held the worsteds—a full half hour, for there were sevaral skeins, and Mrs. Clifden wound them with the greatest deliberation. Rosa felt quite stiff and cramped with standing so long in the same posture.

"Now sit down," said Mrs. Clifden, when she had finished, and read aloud to me from a book you will find lying on the table."

Rosa's spirits rose a little at the idea of a book, but they sank again immediately on taking up the volume indicated, which proved to be an "Abridgment of Modern History"—one of those intolerable books in which the dry bones of history, from which all the beauty has been stripped and all the marrow extracted—the mere facts and results without the causes and motives which give them meaning and interest, or the accessories which give them life and reality—are related in the manner of a catalogue, and with the view solely it would seem of exercising the memory, without improving either the understanding or the feelings. But Mrs. Clifden thought it was useful reading, and exactly suited to a young person. Mrs. Clifden belonged to that class of persons—a tolerably numerous one—who consider loading the memory synonymous with improving the mind. Mrs. Clifden was a great novel-reader herself. She read

novels, however, solely for the sake of the excitement afforded by the plot, and the more extravagant and surprising and even unnatural it was, she liked it the better. To the moral interest of the tale, to the poetry, or the humour, she was almost blind. If there was any kind of humour to which she was alive, it was that inferior kind which paints only the oddities of *manner*. That which lovingly sympathises with, while it smiles at the peculiarities and weaknesses of human nature, and which proceeds at once from a keen and pitying perception of them, and a conscious participation in them, was quite unseen by her. That all men are brothers in some mysterious unreal sense Mrs. Clifden had read and fancied she believed ; but she never felt that tie of a common nature—common sorrows, common joys, common temptations, and a common destiny—which it is at once the happiness and pain of larger minds and gentler hearts, to experience. Mrs. Clifden's prevailing feeling, and it was a grateful one to her, was that she was different from other people—far removed beyond vulgar cares and anxieties.

But though she read novels herself, she did not consider it proper that Rosa should read them. She had an idea that dullness and formality, and strictness were good for young people, more especially for Rosa, whom, after the scene of last night, she believed to be excitable and passionate, characteristics which Mrs. Clifden regarded with the greatest disapprobation in any one, and with absolute horror in a girl in Rosa's situation. Mrs. Clifden required from the poor and the friendless, and the dependent, a different class and degree of virtues from those she expected in the rich. Rosa, she thought, had been spoilt, and brought up she feared with the most absurd ideas and expectations, considering her situation and prospects, and she now thought it her duty to keep her down in every possible way, more especially by alluding to her dependent state, and the duty of conforming to it in her manners and notions.

Mr. Clifden did not come in to luncheon. His aunt said he seldom ate any luncheon—an interesting piece of information, which she fol-

lowed up with several others on the same subject. It was the only one on which she talked with any freedom, or seemed for a moment to lose sight of her own greatness. But she talked to Rosa about Robert as if it were a sort of favour and condescension on her part, and a great honour to the latter. Rosa perceived that as a matter of course she was considered quite a different order of being from Robert.

“ Robert,” said Mrs. Clifden, “ is excessively clever. In mathematics he was considered at Oxford quite a genius, and gained the highest honours. As a debator, he is thought quite unequalled, and intends at the next general election, which cannot be distant more than a year or two, to stand for the borough of Mar-lepool. You cannot perhaps, Rosa, at your age and with your opportunities, quite understand all I am saying; but you will be able at least to comprehend that my nephew is an excessively clever and promising young man. He is also, as even you, who have seen nothing of the world or of good society, and are too young

besides to know much of such things, must perceive, a perfect model for a gentleman. Did you ever see manners more refined, or more dignified than those of Mr. Robert Clifden?"

Rosa returned no answer. She felt that if she replied with truth she must give mortal offence. Mrs. Clifden thought that admiration and reverence held her silent. She continued.

"Except that he is of a different sex you could not have a better model to study, only of course it would not do for a girl of your years and in your very different situation of life to take upon you in society in the way that is perfectly becoming in a young man of talent and property like Mr. Clifden. And I have another thing to say, Rosa, before I am done. I thought I remarked a little petulance in your behaviour to Mr. Clifden this morning. Robert of course is quite above noticing such a thing in you, but I remarked it, and I consider anything of that sort to my nephew the same as to myself. You must treat him for the future with the greatest respect, and as the master of my house. Attend

to his wishes in everything the same as to mine. Consider his desires your laws. It is only right and becoming in your relative positions. It is his wish as well as mine, for he has an unusually generous disposition, that you should have every necessary comfort here ; he really makes a sacrifice in having you, for he is fond of quietness and does not care for very young people, and you are therefore bound to be very grateful to him. And I think it proper to make you aware of this as I trust, young as you are, you have sense to see the line of conduct you ought to adopt."

Still Rosa did not answer. She felt sad and mortified, and as to behaving to Mr. Robert Clifden as his aunt ordered, it was as far as possible from her intentions. She could not perceive, in spite of what Mrs. Clifden had said, that she was under any obligation to him. She felt if she spoke it must be in indignation.

Mrs. Clifden still imputed her silence to submission.

Having finished her harangue, she rose, care-

fully picked the ends of worsted off her rich black silk dress, and telling Rosa she might now go out and take a walk in the grounds, she swept out of the room in a slow and dignified manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE day still continued fine, and as Rosa had nothing more to do apparently, it struck her that a ramble in the mild autumnal woods might refresh her weary spirits. Having wrapped herself in a warm shawl and put on her bonnet she set off alone. There was a little gate leading to a foot-path in the woods at the end of the house, and Rosa struck in here. The November sun was already low in the sky, and the slanting beams streamed in between the bare branches, and fell in a broad sheet of pale gold on the little river which was visible through

the trees. Ere long Rosa emerged from the wood and found herself in the open part of the park, which skirted along the hills. The moss and ferns which covered the latter were now sere and brown, the low brushwood at the foot of the acclivities, and the trees scattered here and there, singly or in groups, were almost denuded of their leaves, but the grass was still green, while the pines which grew in the higher places wore now, in its deepest shade, that dark bluish tinge which is peculiar to them. The sunlight fell also on the grey crags, investing them with its own calm glory, the light clouds skimmed over the clear blue sky ; there was no want of variety of tint, though the colours were all somewhat cold in hue. Rosa felt the beauty of the scenery ; but its wild and lonely sadness made her weep while it soothed her. Rosa loved nature passionately in all its aspects, and this in which she now beheld it was different to any she had met with in her limited experience, and she was deeply though almost painfully interested. On she walked, oblivious.

of time and distance till she had climbed over the shoulder of a hill, and could see into the valley on the other side ; for Rosa, like most young persons of ardent minds, could never see a hill without longing to discover what lay beyond it. A very pretty view it was in the present case, of a pleasant green valley, but not so wild or picturesque as that in which Rivers-thwaite was situated. The stream or beck by which it was watered was small and tame in comparison. Its banks were flat and cultivated, and the declivities of the hills by which it was hemmed in were smooth, sloping, and grassy. Altogether it had a quiet beauty of its own.

In the bottom of the valley, pleasantly situated among trees was a little village, with a church, the spire of which rose tall and clear in the declining sunlight.

Tired with her ascent, Rosa sat down to enjoy the prospect ; the novelty of the scenery, the healthful exercise, the clear, bracing mountain air had done her spirits good. The sorrows and anxieties of the last few weeks, and the

mortifications and trials of one day, even with the prospect they opened of a chilling and loveless future, could not so soon damp the spirits of sixteen. Rosa's hopes rose with her spirits. Some way must present itself of gaining a more agreeable position — something pleasant must happen soon, and a thousand wild and vague visions of action, adventure, and success, began to crowd the busy and ardent imagination of Rosa Grey. As soon as she was rested she began to descend the hill, eager for further exploration. She had gone some way on the other side towards the village when she heard the church clock strike. She found it would be necessary instantly to retrace her steps in order to reach home before dinner, even before nightfall, for the sun had now sunk very low, and the valley lay in shadow.

Immediately she turned back and hastened to re-climb the hill—fearful of incensing Mrs. Clifden and her disagreeable nephew. Not that she minded the latter, except as his displeasure affected his aunt. She returned quickly up the hill by a much

steeper place than she had come down, her cheeks burning and her heart throbbing with the unwonted exercise. When at last she had attained the summit, she was annoyed to find that she was further from Riversthwaite than she had imagined, and that on descending she should be obliged to cross a beck which lay between her and her goal. She ran fast down the hill, walking over bogs and scrambling through thickets. The beck she found her most formidable difficulty; it flowed in a deep rocky bed, the stream was still full after the late rains, and Rosa could find no place narrow enough to jump across, or shallow enough to afford dry stones on which she might step. It now began to grow quite dark, and Rosa, in no small trepidation, ran from one part to another to find a crossing. At last seeing no other way she plunged right into the stream.

She was just clambering the steep, stony, though not very high bank on the opposite side, hot, wet, and panting, when from behind a tree she descried the figure of a gentleman approach-

ing. As he drew a few steps nearer she recognised Mr. Blakeney.

“Miss Grey!” he cried in some surprise, but his face lighting up with interest and pleasure. “You run some risk of being benighted. Let me help you up this bank.”

“Thank you,” she said as she took his offered hand, and the next instant she found herself beside him on the turf.

“Have you been swimming?” he asked laughingly, as the wet state of her garments next met his eye.

“No,” she said laughing too, and much relieved to see her polite friend of the evening before.

“May I be pardoned for asking what you have been doing?”

“I have lost my way and I am afraid I am too late for dinner.”

“I shall be happy and proud to show you the way. But where have you been?”

Rosa now related her adventures to her companion. He seemed amused and interested by them. He asked her—

“Did you admire the other valley as much as this?”

“No, not so much; but it is very pretty and secluded. What is its name?”

“It is called Ellerdale. My home is there, close by the little church, which perhaps you remarked.”

“Yes I did remark it, but I thought you were the vicar of Riversthwaite.”

“Of the united parishes of Riversthwaite and Ellerdale; the church and vicarage are in Ellerdale.”

“Then you live some way from Riversthwaite.”

“Three miles by the carriage road; but not much more than one over the hill by a short cut. You, however, have made a tremendous détour. But how quickly you walk, Miss Grey, I can hardly keep up with you.”

“I am afraid I am too late, and Mrs. Clifden will not be pleased.”

“If that is the case then we must run; as it would never do to displease Mrs. Clifden.” And

he quickened his pace, offering his arm to Rosa to assist her onward. It was now growing quite dark. Grey mists floated up the bed of the river and spread over the valley. The shadows of evening folded all objects in their soft embrace, blending in one deep neutral tint hill and copsewood, rock and pine thicket, while the stars twinkled out in the darkening sky. There was a charm to Rosa in the grave, cold aspect of the night ; but she could not linger now to admire it. Her companion did not appear to perceive it. He talked on pleasantly and cheerfully ; there was, it was true, neither very deep wisdom nor very brilliant wit in anything he said ; but his conversation was as pleasant to Rosa as if it had combined the wisdom of Socrates with the wit of Sydney Smith.

They had entered the wood on the other side of which the house lay, when a figure was dimly descried approaching them through the trees. It was not, however, till the person to whom it belonged spoke, that Rosa recognised Watkins.

"Miss, is it you?"

"Yes, Watkins. I hope I am not very late," Rosa answered with some trepidation.

"Why, Miss, you *are late*, it wants but a quarter of an hour to dinner, and my mistress is very punctual. My mistress does not like to be kept waiting," he replied in a somewhat stately manner.

"Oh I hope Mrs. Clifden is not angry."

"Well, Miss," said Watkins, his stateliness now giving way to compassion, as he caught the alarmed accents of poor Rosa, "my mistress does not like to be kept waiting, as is natural and proper in a lady like my mistress; but you need not be much afraid I think. If I can help you in any way, Miss—I can get you a candle as we go in, that you may not have to wait in your own room till Mrs. Springer has time to answer your bell," he added with an ineffable air of condescension, which seemed to say that it was not his business, but that out of sympathy for Rosa, as a friend, not as a servant, he would so far lower his dignity as to fetch a candle.

Mr. Blakeney now took leave.

"Thank you," said Rosa; "I should have been an hour longer in finding my way without you."

"It is a pleasant walk in the park," said Mr. Blakeney, "and may well make a stranger forget the time. Shall you often walk there, Miss Grey?"

"Oh yes—I think so — very often," answered Rosa.

The young clergyman now went back, and Rosa returned to the house with Watkins. The latter glanced over his shoulder at the retreating figure of Mr. Blakeney, which was, however, scarcely visible in the dusk, and then at the back of Rosa's bonnet with a peculiar, knowing, expression. His tone, however, had lost none of its usual decorum as he remarked to Rosa in the conversational style of the morning—

"A very nice gentleman is Mr. Blakeney! He does a deal of good in the neighbourhood, and is a very fine preacher."

"Is he?" cried Rosa, much interested, and forgetting for the moment to keep up her dignity.

"A very handsome young gentleman too Miss, don't you think?"

"Exceedingly so," said Rosa, beginning to have misgivings about discussing Mrs. Clifden's guests with the butler, and really anxious to know how she ought to receive the advances towards intimacy made by Watkins. Of all the household, he alone appeared inclined to feel or show kindness towards her; yet Rosa, proud, shy, fearful of committing herself, and wishful above all things not to compromise her dignity as a lady, above all places at Riversthwaite, did not meet his good-will with the same ease and freedom she would have done at Birkenside, or had she been a young lady-visitor and not merely a poor and dependent relation. But Watkins was not to be repressed.

"I think Mr. Blakeney handsomer even than Master."

"Oh far!" cried Rosa, impulse triumphing again over dignity.

Again there was a knowing look in Watkins's eye, but he took care Rosa should not see it. As soon as they had arrived in the hall, bidding her wait for a minute, he left her, but returned in the space of a few seconds with a candle which he lighted at the hall fire, and presented with pompous respect. There had been nobody in the corridor, and Watkins in his real good-nature had *run* for the candle, but he would not for the world that any of his fellow-servants or even Rosa herself should have known that he had so let himself down, as he conceived it. He whispered as he gave her the light,

"I shall keep back the dinner, Miss, a few minutes. I can always arrange these matters."

On the stairs Rosa met Mrs. Springer.

"Oh! you have come in, Miss Grey!" she said in a manner which Rosa felt to be insolent, though her face wore its usual grave expression, and her voice was not altered from its usual calm tone. "My mistress is dressed, and dinner I believe is ordered. I am sorry, Miss Grey,

as you are so late it will not be in my power to-day to assist at your toilet. Like my mistress, I am an admirer of punctuality and method, and I could not do it without interfering with my other duties and disarranging altogether my routine."

"Thank you, Mrs. Springer," said Rosa loftily, "I am quite able to dress myself. I beg you will not concern yourself about me in any way." And she walked past with the air of a princess.

Mrs. Springer too went on her way. "Minx!" she said between her teeth. "But she'll not cut me out here I expect."

Instead, however, of going to her duties, Mrs. Springer returned to Mrs. Clifden's dressing-room, where that lady, seated in an easy-chair by a blazing fire, was finishing the last volume of a new novel ere she went down to the drawing-room.

"Come in," she said as Mrs. Springer knocked.

"Well, Springer, what do you want?"

"I thought, ma'am, I had best let you know that Miss Grey has come in."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Clifden. "Do you know where she has been?"

"No, ma'am; Miss Grey did not appear inclined to be communicative."

"Did she appear much annoyed at being too late?"

"Oh no ma'am, not at all. When I just hinted, ma'am—of course I should not have presumed to throw any blame on any young lady related to you, ma'am—that you were very punctual and liked those dependent on you to be the same, Miss Grey seemed quite offended, ma'am, and said I need not give myself any concern about her. I don't think she is at all uneasy, ma'am."

"Miss Grey," said Mrs. Clifden who, at least when she was in her dressing-room, was more familiar and confidential with Mrs. Springer than with any one else; "Miss Grey, Springer, is a very young girl—quite a child indeed, and has been much spoilt, and allowance must

be made for her. I hope she did not speak petulantly to you."

"I am sure, ma'am, she could not mean to do so, I am the last person in the world, ma'am, to see a fault in any relation of yours, or any young lady you take an interest in. But though you are of course, ma'am, so great a lady yourself, you are always so different. Perhaps I am spoilt, ma'am, and I really begin now to feel quite sorry I came to let you know Miss Grey had come back, as if I had not you would never have asked me this; but as you have, of course I must tell the truth. I would not say *petulant*, ma'am, I would not for the world say that, but I do think Miss Grey rather high: but it may be my own fancy." Mrs. Springer made this speech in her usual grave, deliberate, respectful, and self-respecting manner.

Mrs. Clifden listened with a lofty, imperturbed air; but yet as if she were interested. She answered:

"I am sorry, Springer, Miss Grey should have

so far forgotten herself, as it is certainly much out of character in a young lady in her position to be what you call high. Hand me my pocket-handkerchief, I am going down."

Mrs Springer watched her mistress march out of the room, with some complacency. She felt she had made some impression. Mrs Springer had been for many years in the service of Mrs. Clifden, and having studied the weaknesses and peculiarities of her mistress had contrived to make herself a great favourite. She was a selfish, avaricious, cold-hearted, unscrupulous woman, and from the first moment she had heard of the arrival of Rosa, had looked upon her as an interloper and a rival. Not that Mrs Springer cared for the affection of her mistress except as it manifested itself substantially, but she feared the arrival of Rosa might diminish the number of her perquisites and the quantity of cast-off clothes which fell to her share, and might possibly interfere with her interests in various ways. She wanted no one between her mistress and herself.

Her dislike to Rosa was also now augmented by the spirited manner in which the latter had received her reproof, and the distance Rosa observed towards her. "I am as good as she any day," said Mrs. Springer to herself, "for what is she but a sort of genteel pauper."

Mrs. Clifden found Rosa already in the drawing-room standing at one side of the table, over which, according to what appeared to be his custom, Mr. Clifden had lighted two candles in the chandelier. He was pouring over a large tome at the other side.

"You have dressed quickly, Rosa, she said with grave displeasure.

"I feared I should be too late. I lost my way on the hills and dreaded so much you might wait dinner."

"You need not have dreaded that. *We* should certainly not have waited dinner for *you*."

Rosa coloured crimson, but would not trust her voice to answer. Mrs. Clifden continued after a short pause with increasing severity:

"I hope, Rosa, you will never take the liberty of being too late at my dinner-table. If you do, it shall be my care that so great an impropriety does not pass unnoticed. It is also my duty as your guardian to let you know that I consider it excessively unlady-like in a young girl to wander about the country alone and remain out till after dark. I desire such a thing may not be repeated. In short I will not permit it."

With burning cheeks and stammering voice Rosa began a vindication of herself. Mrs. Clifden cut her short.

"Rosa—Rosa—such tones as these are not for my drawing-room. Be silent till you can speak with more composure; and on this subject be silent altogether. Do not presume to argue with me. Submission and humility are proper virtues in young persons."

Here Robert Clifden looked up from his book and inquired in a tone of surprise what was the matter. His aunt explained in her own fashion. As she finished speaking he glanced at Rosa's face, and mistaking the cause of its perturbation, rejoined,

"Rosa lost herself on the hills and ran in to dinner bloused and breathless. Not a very dignified proceeding, but as my elders used to say in my time 'Young people will be young people,' and Rosa, like all good girls will, I am sure, promise not to do it again. In the meantime I beg pardon for her. You must grant it to me."

Mrs. Clifden's hard, dark eyes softened for a moment as she looked at her nephew.

"You are too kind to Rosa, Robert. She ought to be grateful."

"And I have no doubt will show her gratitude by handing me that book from the end of the piano. Come, Rosa, dry your eyes or you will not be able to see it."

"I am not crying," said Rosa, her voice choking, and her face inflamed with the effort she made to keep back the indignant, scalding tears. She rose and went for the book, but her hand trembled so she could scarcely hold it. As he took it from her and met the glance of her flashing eyes, he whispered,

"It is well my aunt does not see you. Go sit in the shade till you are calmer."

Rosa had never felt any thing so near hatred in her life as she felt at that moment. She was shocked at herself and even tried to breathe a mental prayer for patience and endurance. Dinner was now announced, and Mrs. Clifden taking her nephew's arm bade Rosa follow. All the time of dinner, in what seemed to Rosa a teasing, insolent way, Mr. Robert Clifden offered her almost everything present. She always refused, and was made still more indignant by the perception that her refusals only amused him. His amusement, however, was shown in so slight and well-bred a manner, that it could have been perceptible to no one but the subject of it; and even she did not feel quite certain.

But Rosa was maturing a resolution in her own mind.

CHAPTER IX.

THE hardly conscious feeling of shyness or awkwardness which Rosa's presence had caused in Mr. Robert Clifden had now quite left him. He had got used to her, and fancied he understood her, and above all he had no longer in his mind any remains of the feeling that good-nature required him to speak to and to notice her. The events of the evening related in the last chapter, had convinced him that she was "a little vixen," whom it was impossible to conciliate, and whom for the future he would leave entirely to his aunt. The latter he now believed

was perfectly right in thinking her a spoilt child. He therefore gave himself no further concern about her—not that he had ever given himself much. It was only when she was immediately in his presence that he had ever thought of her. But he did not even do that now, except when he wished her to be useful to him in some small way—to fetch a book or a newspaper. Mr. Robert Clifden was one of those persons who, active in mind, and even in body on great occasions, indulged habitually in laziness in trifles. Although he walked or rode many miles every day, and neglected no practical and habitual duty, he hated small interruptions, and could not bear to rise from his seat when he was busy reading or writing. To such an extent did he carry this form of laziness, that on a cold day he would let the fire go out rather than take the trouble to stir it.

In all these small lazinesses and selfishnesses his aunt had encouraged him from his childhood. She would have been much displeased at those peculiarities in any other person; but Robert

Conway Clifden was in her opinion an exception to all general rules. Like majesty he could do no wrong.

Thus unchecked either by himself or others, and indeed almost unconsciously to himself, Robert's natural bias had grown into an established bad habit. Rosa was quite a convenience to him, and he never thought of how *she* might like the office of page. And had it not been for the humiliation it implied, Rosa might not have minded it. She was not at all lazy. But as it was, her indignation almost surpassed the occasion. She only wanted a favourable opportunity to rebel. She felt keenly too the slighting style of his whole behaviour towards her, more especially as contrasted with that of Mr. Blakeney, whom she saw almost daily, and who each time she met him seemed to become more and more agreeable. In one respect only did Mr. Robert Clifden continue to show her any attention, and that was in the way of hospitality. Nature had certainly made him hospitable. Not that he was one of the uncomfortable old

school in this particular, who take pleasure in making their guests eat whether they will or not. He was quite unostentatious in his hospitality, yet it was very apparent. It was the only way he fancied in which he could be kind to Rosa. Mr. Robert Conway Clifden rather liked to be kind to people, but he had not that quick perception of character taught by sympathy alone which intuitively points the way suited to individual cases.

One morning, about ten days after that on which she had lost her way and experienced so much mortification in consequence, Rosa having finished her practising in the lumber-room, came down to Mrs. Clifden's morning-room to warm her fingers at the fire. Instead of finding as was usual at this hour, the aunt in the room, she found the nephew. He was sitting at the round table with three large books beside him. He looked up as Rosa entered, but, without taking any notice of her, went on with his studies. Rosa seated herself on a footstool in front of the fire, intending, however, to move as

soon as she should hear Mrs. Clifden's step. The latter she felt certain would consider her position undignified. Moreover, she was certain to think that a girl in Rosa's position had no right to be so very cold.

She had sat thus about ten minutes when Mr. Clifden looking up for a second said,

" Since you are here, Rosa, you may as well give the barometer a tap and tell me whether it is rising or falling."

But Rosa did not stir, nor answer even by the slightest sign.

" Do you hear, Rosa? " he asked quietly.

" Yes, Mr. Robert Clifden, I hear."

" Then why don't you go? "

The opportunity Rosa wanted for had come. She rose from her seat and answered gravely, though with a slight tremor of voice and a heightened colour,

" Because, Mr. Clifden, I am not your servant."

Robert Clifden's face now wore an unmistakeable expression of surprise.

"This is a new humour I think, Rosa."

"No, Mr. Clifden, it is neither new nor a humour." She spoke with a firmness and dignity which surprised him, though her heart was beating fast. "The first day I ever dined in this house I heard you say there could be no dignity of character where there was servility, and that tyrants and slaves were the product of the same soil. They may be sometimes, but not always; no tyranny shall make me servile."

The surprise in Mr. Clifden's face had become something like curiosity.

"I do not understand you," he said coldly.

"If I had been a guest of your aunt's instead of a poor dependent; if I had been a young lady of rank or fortune, would you, Mr. Robert Clifden, have asked me to fetch your books, to ring the bell for you as if I had been a servant? And yet though I am neither rich nor great, I am a lady, the daughter of a brave gentleman, and of a—of the truest gentlewoman this world ever contained. From her I received the edu-

cation and the feelings of a lady, though perhaps it might have been happier for me now if I had not." For the first time Rosa's voice faltered a little, but it quickly regained its firmness. "And yet no, I will not say so, for it would be unworthy of her."

As Rosa spoke she fancied she saw Mr. Robert Clifden start slightly, while a faint flush passed quickly over his pale face—it was the first time she had ever seen there the slightest tinge of colour; and for a moment his light, cold, steady eye seemed to fall; but he quickly raised it again and for a few seconds fixed it on Rosa's warm, glowing countenance with a scrutinising gaze. Then he turned it again on his book, and without making any answer, was, or affected to be, entirely absorbed with its contents.

Rosa sat down again. She longed for Mrs. Clifden to come, for she felt her situation very awkward. She did not know whether it would be better to go or to stay. Thus she remained in hesitation for several minutes. She was

sitting with her face towards the table at which Mr. Clifden was reading and could see him plainly, although she was now placed where he could not see her. She noticed that though his eyes were never taken from the volume he did not turn over the leaf, indeed his sight did not seem even to travel down the page. She wondered what he was thinking—if he were thinking at all of what had just passed, or if he considered the whole matter altogether beneath his notice. At last, as Mrs. Clifden did not come, Rosa began to feel her situation so disagreeable and awkward that she rose and left the room. She had reached the door, when the skirt of her gown catching on a chair, caused her to turn quickly round to disengage it. As she did so, she caught Robert Clifden's keen, blue eye fixed upon her with the same scrutinizing glance as before.

He was thinking of her then.

Not knowing now very well what to do or where to go, she began to walk up and down the corridor, intending to remain there till Mrs.

Clifden should reappear when she might return with her to the room she had left. After waiting, however, for sometime in vain, she became so cold in the gloomy, sunless corridor, that it struck her she had better go into the drawing-room, into which she thought the sun might have now begun to shine. On opening the door to execute this intention, she was surprised to find a blazing fire and Mrs Clifden seated in her usual seat at one side.

" You have been practising a long time this morning surely, Rosa."

" Not longer than usual, ma'am. I have been in the breakfast-room. I did not know you were here."

" I hope you did not disturb Robert at his studies. I forgot to tell you I had given up my morning-room to him to-day as there are work-people in his putting up a bookcase. Was Robert reading ? "

" Yes, Madam,"

" Did he speak to you ? "

Rosa again answered in the affirmative.

She feared Mrs. Clifden would next ask what he had said, but she did not. She merely said they would have no reading to-day, as the book had been left in the breakfast-room, and it would not do to disturb Robert again.

Robert! everything on earth was to give way to Robert. Nobody's pleasure or convenience was to be thought of for an instant in comparison with his. Everything must yield to him. He was Mrs. Clifden's idol. On him was concentrated the whole affection of her nature—in him were garnered the whole pride and hope and ambition of her heart. Rosa almost trembled as she fancied the extent of his aunt's wrath, could she have known what had passed in her late interview. That Robert would ever tell her, she did not for a moment imagine. He would probably, Rosa supposed, treat the whole affair with profound contempt; but at all events she felt certain that whatever might be his faults of arrogance, superciliousness, and pride, he would hardly condescend to so petty a revenge as to prejudice his aunt against an

orphan girl, of whom she was the only protector. She rather imagined he would pay no attention to what had passed, and that things would go on exactly as before. She had some curiosity mingled with apprehension as to how they should next meet; but Rosa would hardly acknowledge the apprehension to herself. She "did not care for Mr. Robert Clifden."

She did not see him again till just before dinner. She had put off the time dressing as long as possible, that both he and Mrs. Clifden might be in the drawing-room, so that there might be no chance of meeting him there alone. Rosa, however, did not allow that this was her object. She would not admit that she was at all afraid of Mr. Robert Clifden. Still her heart did beat a little, a very little, as she entered the room, and seated herself on the uncomfortable *prie-dieu*, which seemed now to have become her seat. Mrs. Clifden was doing nothing.

Mrs. Clifden considered it dignified and *comme il faut*, to do nothing while waiting for dinner, and no *parvenu* in the world, though

Mrs. Clifden was not a *parvenu*, was ever more devoted to being *comme il faut*. Mrs Clifden was one of those to whom, truly, "trifles make the sum of human things."

Mr. Robert Clifden, as usual, was reading at the table, for what his aunt would have resented as a liberty in any other human being, was of course quite right and proper in him.

He was not, however, reading any huge tome of abstruse or erudite aspect, but a magazine. He did not look up as Rosa entered; but Rosa felt an instinctive conviction, that he was aware of her entrance. She had not been seated many seconds ere Mrs. Clifden remarked,

"It is a very hot fire! Rosa, hand me a screen."

Rosa, of course, did as she was desired, and on turning to her seat, she caught for a second the eye of Mr. Robert Clifden fixed on her with the same cold scrutiny she had noticed twice before in the morning. This time he was not looking at her openly and undisguisedly, but

over the edge of his book, which he held in the attitude as if he were reading. He did not, however, withdraw his eye hastily as if caught, but though rapidly, composedly, and as if he did not mind in the least. From the glance itself nothing was to be gathered, with regard to his feelings towards her. It gave Rosa an idea that she was an object of curiosity to him—an object which he viewed probably in somewhat of the same light he might have viewed an insect of eccentric habits, whose peculiarities it might amuse a leisure moment to study, but whose anger or whose satisfaction were equally immaterial and amusing to him.

He and his aunt went into dinner together as usual. As they passed Rosa, who waited to let them go out of the room first, he glanced at her again, but the glance was as keen and steady and inscrutable as ever.

At dinner, however, another change was apparent. He did not pay her the usual hospitable attentions; indeed, save by one more

of the examining glances seemed quite unconscious of her presence.

From this circumstance Rosa judged that after all he did not despise her so totally as she had imagined. He condescended to be offended with her. He took the trouble to attempt to show her that he despised her—an attempt which always baffles its own purpose.

So passed away the evening and the next day. On the succeeding one, Mrs. Clifden announced to Rosa at breakfast time, with the air of conferring honour upon her:

“I am going to drive out to day to pay some visits if the weather is fine, and I shall take you with me, Rosa. I suppose, Robert, my dear, you do not wish to go?”

“No. I am not fond of driving, or paying visits. Where are you going?”

“To Raven’s Nest and Viewlands. I shall invite Miss Cooper and Miss Wills to spend a few days with me. I suppose it will not be inconvenient to you, or interfere with any of your arrangements.”

"Certainly not in the least. I beg, my dear aunt, you will never permit a thought of me to interfere with any of yours."

"My dear Robert—you are always so accommodating."

"Of course the young ladies will not expect that I should devote my whole time to them."

"Certainly not. They are both sensible, nice girls, and cannot but expect that a person of your endowments must have many important studies and demands on their time (Mrs. Clifden was not always perfectly grammatical); still, of course, my dear, I should feel glad if you could devote a little of your time to them. Miss Cooper is a charming girl. She has so much dignity. She is very handsome and accomplished. In a few years she will be a fine woman."

To this speech Robert made no rejoinder. He listened politely as he always did to every thing his aunt said, but the expression of his face was as unmoved and as indifferent as it possibly could be. Rosa felt a little curious to see Miss Cooper, and asked if Miss Wills was related to

the gentleman of the same name who had dined at Riversthwaite on the evening of her arrival.

“Yes. Miss Wills is the half-sister of Mr. Wills by a second marriage, and they both live with a married sister—the wife of Colonel Delancy of Raven’s Nest. The Delancys are nice people, well connected I believe, and Colonel Delancy distinguished himself in India, in some of those wars with the natives,” Mrs. Clifden said patronisingly as regarded the Delancys, and vaguely as regarded the wars. Mrs. Clifden’s ideas of India, both geographically and politically, were of the most indeterminate nature.

“And what is Mr. Wills?”

“He had some Indian appointment too, and has got, I believe, a comfortable fortune”—Mrs. Clifden continued in a manner which seemed to say,

“The Willses and Delancys are of course very inferior to me, but still nice, visitable people enough.”

“Is Mr. Wills at all a clever man?”

“That, Rosa, is not a proper question for a

young girl like you. Young people have no business to have opinions about the cleverness of their elders. It is a piece of presumption which I cannot permit. The abilities of a man such as Mr. Wills must be above your understanding."

"Rosa made no answer, but she was conscious of one of Robert Clifden's rapid glances. But in no other way did he show the least sign of having heard what had passed.

Rosa felt an interest in the intended drive. It would be a little variety at least from the dignified monotony of Riversthwaite, and Miss Wills and Miss Cooper might, perhaps, prove agreeable companions — perhaps friends, and Rosa's heart bounded as she thought of finding a friend of her own age. She was rather anxious to know who or what Miss Cooper might be, but after the rebuff she had met with on the subject of Mr. Wills did not like at present to ask any more questions. Mrs. Clifden, however, after they were in the carriage gave her the information she wished, unasked.

"Now, Rosa, we are first going to Viewlands to call on Lady Cooper. She is the widow of the late Sir George Cooper, and her daughter is an heiress, and a very charming girl. She came of age last summer. She is older than you are and has been introduced; but I have no doubt you will find her quite disposed to be on friendly terms with you notwithstanding. I need not tell you, Rosa, it is of importance for you to make friends of a certain standing. Of course you will show the deference proper to a young lady in Miss Cooper's position."

They were now at Viewlands. It was an interesting old place, but the scenery was not wild or picturesque as at Riversthwaite. The hills were much lower, the stream not so rapid. It was a handsome square mansion, backed by fine woods and commanding a view in one direction over a wide champaign country and on the other of the hills among which lay Riversthwaite; the grounds were undulating, which made them look more extensive than they were in reality. Lady Cooper and her daughter

were at home, and Mrs. Clifden and Rosa were ushered into a handsome drawing-room overlooking the flat country. Lady Cooper was seated in a window recess talking. She was a little, pale, delicate, lady-like woman, with small, pretty faded features and an insipid expression. It would hardly have been possible to imagine a greater contrast to the tall and imposing Mrs. Clifden. The low, whispering tones of Lady Cooper were also in direct contrast with the calm, clear, sonorous, though never vulgarly loud voice of the mistress of Rivers-thwaite Hall. These two ladies, however, seemed great friends and welcomed each other with as much cordiality as the dignity of the one and the languor of the other would permit. It was not for some minutes that Mrs. Clifden introduced Rosa as—

“ Miss Grey, a half-niece of the late Mr. Clifden. She has had the misfortune to be left an orphan, and I have taken her.” Mrs. Clifden did not add—out of charity,—but Rosa painfully felt that her manner implied it, and that Lady Cooper so understood her.

"Poor thing!" said the latter, in a voice, the gentleness of which might have proceeded either from indifference or pity. "Sit down my dear," she added in the same tone.

"Louisa is quite well I hope," said Mrs Clifden.

"Thank you, she is quite well, and I believe somewhere about the house. I shall let her know you are here; she would be very sorry to miss you and your little niece."

As Lady Cooper spoke, she made a sort of movement as if to ring the bell.

"Ring the bell, Rosa," said Mrs. Clifden.

But Rosa had already risen to anticipate Lady Cooper. She would rather her aunt's order had been spared.

"Thank you, my dear," said Lady Cooper in the same languid tone.

The footman having been to let Miss Cooper know, the young lady made her appearance in a few minutes. As she entered the room Rosa glanced at her with some interest.

Miss Louisa Cooper was a young lady rather

above the middle height—with a slender, well-formed, but too stiff figure, a very fair complexion, pink cheeks, dark eyes, a straight nose, and smooth, dark, braided hair. Without looking stupid she did not appear either very intelligent or very lively. Her manner without being conceited, was that of one who was perfectly satisfied with herself. She was a pretty rather than an interesting girl.

"How do you do, Louisa, my dear? I am glad to see you looking so well after your continental trip. I hope you enjoyed it."

"Oh well enough, thank you, Mrs. Clifden," the young lady answered with her mother's indifference, but without her languor or gentleness, though she was not ungentle either. Rosa looked at Miss Cooper with increased interest. She had travelled and seen foreign lands. Rosa almost envied her to have seen so much at her age. The two girls having been introduced, Miss Cooper sat down near Rosa, but after remarking that the weather was warm for the season, subsided into utter silence. The two

elder ladies in the meantime were discussing poultry, and the merits of various kinds of fowls. Mrs. Clifden manifested more interest in the subject than Rosa had hitherto seen her display in any thing which did not relate to Robert. Lady Cooper's gentle, whispering tone never varied, but she showed herself very learned and very fluent on the subject. Miss Cooper sat with still, composed, unvarying countenance, from the expression of which no one could have told whether she were listening or not, for it was neither abstracted nor attentive. Rosa not being much interested in the poultry discussion, at last ventured to begin a conversation with Miss Cooper by asking,

"Have you been in Rome, Miss Cooper?"

"Yes, I was there three months."

"Were you much delighted with it?" continued Rosa, thinking in a sort of confused way of Julius Cæsar, the Colosseum, the Pope, and the Vatican, and musing over in her own mind "Roma, Roma, tu non sei come era prima."

"Yes," said Miss Cooper, "it was very nice at the time of the Carnival."

Another silence succeeded this speech, and then Rosa ventured again to say,

"You have been in Paris too I suppose."

"Yes, but it was a stupid season of the year—nothing going on—not even one fête."

"But were you not delighted with the picture-galleries and with seeing so many places one has read about?"

Still Miss Cooper's pretty, still face did not move or her lady-like voice alter.

"I am fond of paintings, and the works of the best masters are to be seen in foreign collections."

"Do you draw yourself?"

"Sometimes."

"Miss Cooper," said Mrs. Clifden, "draws beautifully. Perhaps Louisa, my dear, if it is not giving you too much trouble you will show Rosa one or two of your performances."

"I should like so much," cried Rosa, "if it is not giving you too much trouble."

"Oh no—not at all," said Miss Cooper with the same impassive, unvarying, manner, as she rose and brought a portfolio.

Miss Cooper's drawings were in water colours, and consisted both of landscapes and representations of the human face divine. They were mostly copies, and were carefully executed, but without a spark of freedom or spirit. In the mechanical part of the art Miss Cooper was apparently a tolerable proficient, but of the soul—the meaning—the poetry—she had evidently not the most remote conception. Uneducated as Rosa's taste was, she felt this at once instinctively. Fortunately her praise was not required, as Mrs. Clifden's gracious approval served for both.

As soon as the exhibition was over, Mrs. Clifden took leave, inviting, as she did so, Miss Cooper, if her mother would spare her, to spend a week at Riversthwaite. For the first time since she had entered the room, the fair, motionless features and mindless eyes, lighted up with a gleam of something like satisfaction. Both

mother and daughter signified their willingness that the invitation should be accepted. Mrs. Clifden patted Miss Cooper on the shoulder with dignified familiarity.

"There is nobody I am happier to see at Riversthwaite than my old favourite, Louisa. Robert will be quite pleased when I go home."

Another gleam of satisfaction in the face of the fair Louisa gave Rosa a new idea, though she almost rejected it, it seemed so strange that any girl should be attracted by Mr. Robert Clifden. Lady Cooper smiled with gentle pleasure at Mrs. Clifden's speech, and probably from an impulse of gratitude turned to Rosa, saying in her soft, mesmerising, un-earnest tones.

"I hope we shall see more of you, my dear. Louisa and you must become friends."

"I hope so," said Louisa, with rather less indifference than she had hitherto shown.

CHAPTER. X.

RAVEN'S NEST was now their destination. It was not quite so far from Riversthwaite as Viewlands, but the way to it lay through a different part of the country and brought them home by rather a circuitous road. Rosa felt interested to be told that it was in Ellerdale parish.

Raven's Nest was not inaptly named. It stood at the top of a high, steep, wooded bank, overhanging the Ellerdale beck. For several feet the cliffs rose abruptly from the stream and the gnarled branches of the old trees overhung them picturesquely. An old, ivied, single-arched

bridge crossed the stream and led to a gate from which a steep road cut among the trees wound up to the house. The latter itself was not un-nest like. It was a real thatched cottage with two large oriel windows looking straight into the green placid valley of Ellerdale, with the Riversthwain hills in the distance. There was a pretty grass-plat, and a pretty flower border with a sun-dial, and a pretty little shruberry of evergreens. Altogether it was a pretty picturesque little place, very "genteel;" but quite unpretending. It was just the sort of place at which Mrs. Clifden of Riversthwain might visit without compromising her dignity, and yet where her visit was almost an act of condescension. Colonel and Mrs. Delancy also were just the sort of people whose acquaintance did not derogate from her consequence, while it could add no lustre to it. All the neighbouring families visited them, and invited them —when they had room at their tables, or when anybody was wanted in a hurry to make up a party. In short the Delancys, if not at all great, were very unexceptionable people.

They were at home, and Mrs. Clifden and Rosa were shown into a pretty, cheerful, little drawing-room, to which belonged one of the oriel windows. There was no one in the room when they entered ; but they had not been seated many seconds when they were joined by two ladies.

The first who entered was a woman between forty and fifty, tall, fair, well-looking, not vulgar in appearance but commonplace both in manner and expression. She wore a purple merino gown which had evidently been remodelled with an attempt far from successful to imitate the newest fashion, and a cap with dyed ribbons also aiming at the stylish.

This lady advanced to greet Mrs. Clifden with demonstrations of the utmost delight and cordiality.

“ This is very kind of you, Mrs Clifden. I was saying to Fanny only this morning, I hope we shall see Mrs. Clifden soon. And you have brought your dear young niece with you. My brother mentioned having met Miss Grey, the

day he dined at Riversthwaite, but I will not mention what he said for fear of putting you to the blush, my dear," she said turning to Rosa, and adding, "Fanny and I have been longing to make your acquaintance. My sister—Miss Wills."

Miss Wills was evidently some years younger than her sister—how many or how few she was not herself very prone to disclose. She always said in a vague way that she "was a great deal younger, that she was by a second marriage." She had been, nay, was still rather pretty, though it could not be denied, that her beauty had for some time been on the wane. She was about the middle height, with a figure much too thin and flat for beauty, and too agile and quick in its movements for grace, or at least for dignity at her years. Her features were small and fair, but sharp and somewhat withered. The roses had faded from her cheeks, her teeth were not so pearly white as they might have been ten years before, her pale brown hair was thin at the seams, and did not form so

handsome a coil as it had once done. Still, Fanny Wills was a pretty woman. She had the brightest grey eyes it was possible to see, a lively expression, a pleasant voice, and a frank, cheerful manner. Occasionally, when in repose, her face had an anxious, slightly dissatisfied expression, but it lost it whenever she became animated. She was dressed in better taste, and was altogether a more pleasing woman than her sister. She received Rosa with what seemed to her real kindness, and while her sister was paying court to Mrs. Clifden—a species of homage which that lady thoroughly enjoyed, though she had too much *savoir faire* to show it—Miss Wills chatted in a lively pleasant way to Rosa on ordinary topics. Unused, as the latter had been for some time, to be treated with familiar equality, Fanny Wills quite won her heart, and in a few minutes she found herself talking to her as if she had been an old friend.

Mrs. Clifden did not make a long visit. Ere she went she invited Miss Wills to spend a few days at Riversthwaighte, to meet Miss Cooper.

Fanny Wills' bright eyes grew yet brighter with satisfaction. It seemed strange to Rosa that anybody should appear glad to come to Riversthwaite.

"It will give me the greatest pleasure," said Fanny, and then Rosa noticed that her manner towards Mrs. Clifden was somewhat deferential. "I shall be most happy to meet Miss Cooper whom I have not seen since her return from abroad. Louisa Cooper was always such a nice girl, and I quite long to be better acquainted with your niece," she added with a kindness which seemed perfectly unfeigned.

"Rosa is much obliged to you," said Mrs. Clifden. "I am sure she will be equally glad."

"Though Miss Grey is younger than I am," returned Miss Wills, "I am sure we shall be friends."

"Rosa is very young—quite a school girl. It is a great disadvantage to girls of her age to be brought too much forward. You must not spoil her, Miss Wills."

"I am not afraid," said Fanny kindly and cordially shaking hands once more.

As they went out they met Colonel Delaney and Mr. Wills, who had been shooting, but who, finding no sport, had returned home. Colonel Delaney was now between fifty and sixty years of age, with an erect, stiff, military figure, yellow, sun-dried complexion, a large hooked nose, thin-lipped, small mouth, much drawn down at the corners, little Chinese eyes, and grey hair standing on end. Altogether the expression of his face gave the idea of a discontented temper. Mr. Wills looked as pompously empty, as on the first occasion on which Rosa had seen him. Both he and Colonel Delaney accosted Mrs. Clifden with the *empressement* with which every one appeared to meet her.

The latter acknowledged his introduction to Rosa by a precise military bow—the former accosted her with condescending gallantry, regretting he had come home just as they were going away, in a manner which seemed to say, “ You must be much gratified and fascinated by my politeness.” To Mrs. Clifden he was dignifiedly deferential. While Colonel Delaney

was exchanging a few words with Mrs. Clif-den, Rosa, by way of something to say, remarked that there was a fine view from the cottage.

"Yes," he said, "it is. The Riverstwaite hills are considered a fine background. The blue tint which the hills assume in the distance adds much to their beauty. Those hills which look blue in the distance, on approaching them are of various colours, sometimes green with grass, sometimes purple with heath or ling, and sometimes even rocky."

Rosa looked rather amazed that Mr. Wills should have thought it necessary to give her this information. She wondered if he thought her a very ignorant person, and if he did, why he had such an opinion. But she might have spared herself these conjectures. Mr. Wills was only thinking of her in reference to the impression he wished to make upon her. It was Mr. Wills' weakness to strive to appear a man of unbounded general information, and with this view he always talked to every one as if he or she were ignorant of all knowledge whatsoever

and as if it were his special mission to enlighten all who were worthy of his notice, from the foundation upwards. He had indeed amassed a considerable store of facts relating to various subjects; but he was quite incapable of generalising his ideas. The knowledge he had acquired he never assimilated. It remained in a crude, undigested mass; and there was one kind of knowledge in which he was absolutely deficient —the knowledge of the extent of his own requirements compared with those of other people. General ignorance he supposed to be much greater than even it is. He continued to the astonished Rosa,

“I said ling or heath you remarked. They are generally confounded by persons ignorant of botany. There are neither here, I believe; but remind me the first time we have an opportunity, Miss Grey, and it will give me great pleasure to shew you the difference.”

But Mrs. Clifden was now in the carriage, and Rosa had hardly time to bow her somewhat amused thanks. Mr. Wills handed her in with

patronising devotion. Mr. Wills had been a handsome man in his youth, and piqued himself on being a lady's man still, when he met a lady worthy of his attentions, and Rosa had the double claim of being a pretty girl, and niece of Mrs. Clifden of Riversthwaite.

Mrs. Clifden did not speak much on their way home, but she was evidently pleased with the result of her morning's drive. Rosa was thinking over the new acquaintances she had made that day, wondering what sort of people they might turn out, thinking she should like to know more of Miss Wills, and speculating on the possibility of Mr. Robert Clifden marrying Miss Cooper. Rosa thought it would be a very suitable match. She fancied they would do exactly for each other. Miss Cooper was precisely the sort of girl she should have supposed Robert Clifden would admire.

When they reached home, Mrs. Clifden, still in great good humour, which she was too stately, however, to show in a conspicuous manner, said to Rosa with more than usual cordiality,

" You have behaved very nicely to-day, my dear. Your manner was becomingly modest, without being awkward. You see I praise you when you deserve it." Mrs. Clifden spoke as if Rosa must be almost overwhelmed with gratification. And strange to say, Rosa was pleased with what might have offended her a month before. Poor child! she was so unused now to commendation. She had begun to fancy she could please no one. Altogether, she was in pretty good spirits as she descended to dinner.

She found Mr. Robert Clifden in the impulsive state he had maintained ever since the scene in the breakfast-room. Rosa's spirits, exhilarated as I have said by the drive and the change, sank again to zero. She would almost rather he had returned to his old unceremoniousness, than that he should have maintained that undemonstrative frigidity. It was uncomfortable to live constantly in the same house with a person whose presence was a perpetual north wind.

" Rosa," said Mrs. Clifden when the cloth was removed and the servants gone, " you

asked me a few days ago if Mr. Wills was a clever man. Your question I thought to imply a very unbecoming doubt and therefore I thought it right not to answer it; if you did entertain such a doubt, I hope you are now sensible how improper it was. Mr. Wills is a very clever man. He has a fund of information on all subjects. Always attend to what he says, as you may learn a great deal. I remarked to-day he was kindly giving you some instruction."

"He appears fond of teaching," was all Rosa ventured to reply. She had discovered already that Mrs. Clifden herself was a woman of no information whatever; but, not at all aware of her own deficiency in any respect, she fancied all who knew more than herself to be prodigies of learning. Rosa's knowledge she supposed to be what her own had been at the age of her protégé—that is, as nearly as possible, absolute ignorance.

As Rosa spoke she caught once more Robert Clifden's keen glance, but this time she

almost fancied, it was not merely scrutinizing but contained a gleam of intelligence. She supposed, however, on a moment's consideration that she must have been mistaken. After a second or two's silence, Mrs. Clifden again addressed her.

"Rosa, you had better go to the drawing-room at once as I wish to have a little private conversation with my nephew."

Rosa instantly prepared to obey, when somewhat to her surprise, Mr. Robert Clifden rose to open the door for her, holding it while she went out, and bowing gravely as she passed. Rosa could not make out what he meant. Was he mocking her? did he wish to make her feel his displeasure? What could he mean?

"Well my dear aunt," said Mr. Robert Clifden, as soon as he had returned to his seat, "and what is to be the subject of this weighty consultation?"

"Robert," said Mrs. Clifden, not abating an iota of her accustomed stateliness of mien or voice, but her eyes softening as they were turned

towards him, "you know there is nothing in the world I have so much at heart as your interest."

"I believe it, Madam," he answered in a tone in which there was no want either of feeling or earnestness. But neither aunt nor nephew were demonstrative. Though no two persons were ever more sincerely attached, their affection was never shown in endearing terms, still less in caresses.

"I have invited Miss Cooper," continued Mrs. Clifden, "to spend next week at Riversthwaite, and she has accepted my invitation. She is a charming girl, and nothing would give me so much pleasure as to see you pay her some attention."

"I hope you do not imagine it possible, my dear aunt, that I could be deficient in attention to any guest of yours."

"Deficient! certainly not, no one could ever think you deficient in all due politeness." As Mrs. Clifden spoke, an observer might have noticed a slight, momentary twinge in the features of her nephew. But not so Mrs. Clifden, who

continued without stopping.—“But in the present case I shall be glad to see something more on your part than mere common politeness, as I have invited Louisa Cooper here chiefly on your account.”

“On my account!” he exclaimed with unfeigned amazement. “Really, my dear aunt, I am at a loss to know why you should have invited the young lady on my account.”

“Of course, Robert, with your fortune and position—the representative of two old families, the heir of two fine properties, and the last of your race, you must marry.”

“I suppose I must some time or other,” he answered, as if it were rather a tiresome necessity.

“And where then, my dear nephew, are you likely to find a more suitable alliance than in Miss Cooper? With birth and fortune, which places her on an equality with yourself, she has beauty and youth, and every feminine accomplishment.”

“I have no doubt Miss Cooper is all you

represent her. To tell you the truth, I seldom see much difference between one young lady and another ; they are all prettily behaved, and play, and draw, and dance, and crochet, and talk about the last new opera, and the last style of bonnet, except, perhaps, that some are prettier, though the majority seem to share even that pretty equally. Miss Cooper, perhaps, has more than the average share of roses and lilies, and if I were thinking of marrying at this present time, might be as eligible as any one else—that is, provided she could so far think of honouring me.”

“ As to that, Robert, Louisa Cooper though a young girl, has sense enough to see that there is no one here, and few anywhere, who possess your advantages of every kind. Lady Cooper would, I am sure, be as much delighted as myself, and her mother’s approbation would also, of course, have great weight with a well brought up girl. Do think of it, my dear. Promise me that you will.”

“ My dear aunt, you have all your life been

my best friend, and I should be most ungrateful were I not ready to do much to give you pleasure. But in so very serious an affair as choosing a wife, the principals ought, I think, to be chiefly considered. I do promise you, as a duty to you and to society, to marry some time or other ; but surely there is no hurry. I am only twenty-five. Ten years after this, I shall be still almost a young man. Many much older men seem to have no difficulty in making advantageous matches. Give me ten years, and then I shall submit with a good grace to be ordered to marry—I shall look out for a suitable lady in good earnest."

"But Louisa Cooper will be married long before then."

"But Louisa Cooper is not the only good looking, well brought up girl in the world, and at five and thirty, I have no doubt I shall find some women between twenty and thirty, with all the requisites."

Mrs. Clifden shook her head—then inquired : "And what are those ? "

"Good looks, good manners, good temper. In addition to those, for I have no doubt Miss Cooper possesses all, what I want is not so very uncommon—your young friend, I know, has good fortune. But I leave that out of the question. I shall never marry for money."

"Not for money, certainly. To see you married to a plain, disagreeable woman, older than yourself, if she had a million, is the last thing I should desire. It is very foolish to make such a match, and the world always considers it discreditable and undignified. One loses more than one gains by it. But my dear Robert, I should not expect you to be so foolishly romantic, as when you can have good fortune in addition to every thing else that is desirable, to despise it in that way."

"I do not despise fortune; but I have enough—enough of my own—and you have often told me that I shall inherit yours, though God grant it may be at a very distant day." Again Robert's voice bespoke sincere feeling, and again his aunt's dark eyes softened as they met his.

"At all events, Robert, promise me that you will not irrevocably decide against Miss Cooper. She may please you."

"I will not decide absolutely, but at the same time I cannot hold out much hope that I shall fall in love as people call it, and nothing short of such insanity would induce me to marry at present."

Mrs. Clifden heaved a slight sigh of regret. Her nephew continued jestingly, evidently rather amused by her discomfiture, yet speaking kindly and respectfully.

"I shall never fall in love. It is not my nature—I have no genius for the tender passion. When I marry it shall be some woman whom I admire and approve and like, and with whom I may hope to be happy in a rational way ; but I shall never think any woman an angel—never feel that I cannot exist without her."

"No, no. I know you would never be guilty of such folly as that. I shall only add, Robert, Miss Cooper is exactly the girl you describe."

"I do not doubt it; but then the objec-

tion is, that I do not wish to marry at present. I have a thousand things to do first. In short, it would thwart all my plans, and put a stop to all my projects to have a wife at present—not to mention a family, perhaps. My dear aunt, the bare idea is overwhelming! It would be the end of all quiet, and study, and leisure—in short, of everything rational!"

Mrs. Clifden said no more; but still hoped something from Miss Cooper's beauty and propriety of manner, which she fancied must be exactly suited to Robert's taste. Mrs. Clifden could never imagine that Robert's taste might differ from her own.

CHAPTER XI.

Miss COOPER and Miss Wills arrived together. Miss Cooper had come round by Raven's Nest, and fetched Fanny in her carriage. They arrived just as the gong sounded for dressing for dinner.

Rosa came in from her solitary walk as the carriage drove up to the door. Watkins was in attendance in the hall in his very grandest state. It had already been arranged in the servants' hall that Miss Cooper was a suitable match for Mr. Robert, and Watkins viewing her as the possible future lady of Riversthwaite, was inspired

with the wish to give her as exalted an impression as [possible of the dignity of the establishment. But whether or not he made the desired impression he never could discover. Miss Cooper's face never on any occasion changed from its cold, composed, passionless beauty. She shook hands with Rosa with characteristic apathy, scarcely touching her hand, and then turned to her maid to say,

“ See, Delphine, that I have not left anything in the carriage.”

Very different was the greeting of Miss Wills.

“ My dear Miss Grey, I am so glad to have another opportunity of seeing you.” And Fanny’s lively bright grey eyes became still brighter with what appeared to be real pleasure, while the cordial grasp of her hand made poor Rosa’s heart warm towards her.

In the drawing-room the guests were received by Mrs. Clifden and her nephew—the former welcoming Miss Cooper with a cordiality Rosa had never seen her exhibit to any other person

—Robert always excepted. Rosa watched Miss Cooper's face, for she was curious and interested in her as a sort of mystery. Her features continued cold and impassive; but her manner bespoke a sort of mixture of deference and gratification, at the same time that she seemed to think the distinction with which she was treated was no more than her due. As Mr. Robert Clifden greeted her with the politeness he showed to all, and hoped she had had a pleasant time on the continent, and enquired if she were glad to get back to England after so long an absence as three years, she showed a little more interest, answering,

“ She was very glad indeed—she was so fond of travelling, but there was no place like England.” But though she spoke with some degree of gentle emphasis, there was no warmth in her tone, no variation in her fair, automaton-like face.

“ How well they are suited to one another ! ” thought Rosa, as she remarked Robert looking at Miss Cooper, when she had turned again to

his aunt, with a peculiar examining look. The next instant she was surprised to meet his eyes turning from Miss Cooper directly towards herself with the same rapid glance she had before noticed. There was this difference, however, in the present instance, that instead of seeming quite unconscious that she had noticed him, or if conscious, quite unmoved, he looked for a moment almost caught, and hastily withdrew his glance. Rosa did not doubt that he had been instituting in his mind a comparison between Miss Cooper and herself highly favourable to the former. Miss Wills meanwhile was making herself agreeable to Mrs. Clifden—a share of whose graciousness, though a very inferior one compared with what Miss Cooper enjoyed, descended upon her also. At last Mrs. Clifden proposed they should go to dress.

“Rosa will help you, Miss Wills—Louisa I suppose has her maid. Springer will show you your rooms. They are opposite each other.”

Miss Cooper’s room was one of the principal bed-rooms. It had silk hangings, large mirrors,

a sofa, an easy chair, and every comfort and luxury that could be desired. Miss Wills' was a much smaller room, neat and comfortable, with chintz curtains, oak furniture, one nice mirror on a toilet table covered with white muslin—in short it was a snug, comfortable, little apartment, but of a totally different class from that allotted to the heiress of Viewlands, yet on the other hand as far removed in appearance from the bare, fireless chamber appropriated to the dependent orphan niece of the late Mr. Clifden.

As soon as Miss Wills and Rosa were alone together, the former once more expressed her satisfaction at making Rosa's acquaintance, and hoped they should see a great deal of each other. Rosa responded warmly,

" You are so kind, dear Miss Wills. I shall be so very, very glad. I feel sometimes so solitary, so"—Rosa stopped, partly from a choking sensation, partly because she thought it better to say no more.

" My poor dear child!" cried Miss Wills,

embracing her affectionately. "We must be an immensity together, surely nobody could do otherwise than love and be kind to you." Fanny spoke almost interrogatively.

"Oh," cried Rosa, "it is very kind of Mrs. Clifden to have taken me to live with her, and indeed, I am sure she means to be very kind—"

"Oh my love, I quite understand. Mrs. Clifden is a delightful woman—quite the first person in the neighbourhood, but not just the companion to understand the feelings of a young girl. Young unmarried people want sympathy and sentiment, in short—but you and I shall be great friends, I suspect," she added knowingly, caressing Rosa all the time she was speaking; "I suspect we shall be much with each other all this week. Louisa Cooper is a very handsome girl, don't you think?"

"Yes—she has regular features and a fine complexion."

"I think her a great beauty—everybody thinks her so. Louisa Cooper with her beauty and her fortune has a right to look very high.

Mr. Clifden with his fortune, position, and talents, is just the match for her—and so suited in age. They will be a charming couple."

Rosa could not echo this sentiment, nor could she quite comprehend it. She looked a little puzzled. She had the most tell-tale countenance in the world. Fanny answered her expression :

" Everybody considers them so," she said, as if that quite settled the matter at once. " Mr. Robert Clifden is a clever, distinguished young man. Of course, you know, we could not expect him to notice *us* much. You and I, my dear Miss Grey, have no fortune or position—we are not in a situation to look for much attention from Mr. Robert Clifden, though I must say he is very polite to everybody—a thing you seldom see in young men."

" We are only poor. There is no disgrace in that."

" No disgrace—still we ought not and cannot expect the attention Miss Cooper meets with, with her fortune and beauty."

" But there are better things than fortune and

beauty.” Miss Wills stared a little, and then replied :

“ Goodness and amiability, and all that. Oh, of course, in a family circle one prefers amiable people to all others, but not in society.”

“ In the society of good and wise people surely—of the people whose attention or friendship only is valuable.”

Again Miss Wills looked with her bright eyes in a sort of astonished manner and as if she did not quite understand her young companion. Fanny Wills was one of those people who think that in society, “ Whatever is, is right,” or at least necessary, and never seemed to dream it might be otherwise. She merely remarked,

“ I am afraid, dear, you are rather romantic. Now I am dressed—I never take long. I shall go with you now.”

Miss Wills on arriving in Rosa’s chamber surveyed it with some consternation.

“ What a horrid cold room! I shall ask Mrs. Clifden to let you sleep with me while I

am here, and we shall have such nice chats at night. I suppose, dear, you have no objection."

Rosa had none. The warmth and comfort of Fanny's room was tempting, and so was her lively, cordial manner, though Rosa felt she did not quite understand her, and in a dim way began to suspect that though a kind person she was by no means possessed of a very comprehensive understanding. And in truth Rosa was right. Fanny Wills was a woman naturally of an affectionate disposition, and warm, generous feelings, more especially of compassion. In mind also she was in many respects above the average, being quick, lively, with a considerable share of observation, fluent in language, and graphic in description. She had also a taste for poetry—that of the sentimental class more especially, though poetry of the highest and loftiest nature was to her quite incomprehensible. But with various fine natural qualities, Fanny Wills was neither a very sensible nor a very high-minded woman. She had been wretchedly educated, not, perhaps, as regards "music and

French and the usual branches of good education," to employ the language of a boarding-school advertisement; but in the more important part of education—in the development of the understanding and the discipline of the feelings she was quite deficient. With the ordinary share of superficial accomplishments, and not more ignorant than the mass of womankind and mankind, her reasoning powers, never of the strongest, had lain almost fallow, while her aims in life had been so misdirected, that an absolute confusion, which hers was not the nature spontaneously to seek to disentangle, existed in her mind between right and wrong. Fanny Wills never reasoned, and she believed of things exactly as they had been taught to her by precept and example—never seeking to make her notions (one could not dignify them with the name of opinions) consistent.

Fanny's mother had been a commonplace, worldly, but good-tempered woman, who had brought up both her own daughter and her husband's to regard wealth, position, and worldly

consideration as the grand objects of human ambition, and those endowed with them as alone worthy of honour. A deep and intense respect for worldly greatness was the sentiment most deeply imprinted by early education on the mind of Fanny Wills. That this position, this greatness, could only be conferred upon the sex to which she belonged by marriage was another principle ineradicably implanted in her mind.

In early youth she had been very pretty and much admired, and it had never entered into her imagination to doubt that she was to be one of the fortunate of the world. But as youth waned and beauty faded, and disappointments multiplied and admirers dropped away, and what appeared to her the terrific doom of single life stared her in the face, poor Fanny's spirits and sometimes even her temper gave way. It was a constant struggle between her natural liveliness and her disappointed feelings, between her natural amiability and the soured notions produced by the views he chose to entertain and to suppose others entertained of her own insig-

nificance. Thus her kindly feelings and warm sympathies found vent rather towards those who were poor and depressed than towards the prosperous and happy. The rich and the great like Mrs. Clifden and Miss Cooper it was true she respected and reverenced. They had always been so, and seemed to have a prescriptive right to their grandeur. But when others, originally not so important as herself, outstripped her in the race after worldly success, she felt injured and mortified, and it generally took sometime ere she could altogether rid herself of a feeling of irritation at their success and accord them the veneration due to it. Such is a faint outline of the character of Rosa's new friend—a person of whom it might be said, there were many worse, though at the same time I sincerely believe there are several better.

Poor Fanny Wills! she was so totally ignorant of the true source both of dignity and happiness. She thought because she went regularly to church on Sundays and holydays, and had the usual conventional notions concerning the

proprieties of life, that she knew all that was necessary of religion. But of the Power that lifts us above our own weaknesses, which through the false and meretricious grandeur with which the world dazzles and blinds its votaries, makes us visible realities—the Power which teaches rightly to estimate our own dignity and that of others—and to know that these can depend on no adventitious circumstance—the Power which keeps us humble in exaltation, self-respectful in depression, dignified and cheerful always, she was totally ignorant. She measured herself and all other things and persons by what the world thought. She had never learned to know that that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. What “everybody said,” and “everybody thought” was the ultimatum of Fanny Wills.

Miss Wills and Rosa descended together to the drawing-room, both rather curious to see the progress of what they believed to be Mr. Robert Clifden's courtship of Miss Cooper. They found all the party, with the addition of Mr. Blakeney,

assembled. The latter, as soon as the ordinary greetings had been exchanged, placed himself behind Rosa's chair and began to speak to her in a lowered tone of voice. Of late, Mr. Blakeney had got into a habit of speaking to, and consulting Rosa about his daily occupations. She was quite *au fait* of the Sunday school, the singing class, and the clothing society.

To-night Mr. Blakeney was full of the clothing society. There was no part of his duty he said which puzzled him so much as this. He had had his sale to-day, and he had never been so much at a loss in his life. He did not know one kind of material from another, and the names of all were equally strange to him. He then related in rather a humorous way, several of his blunders, his dark eyes bright with amusement, and his whole handsome, somewhat florid countenance, as it was turned to Rosa's, beaming with mirth and pleasure. Hers too was lifted to his with a satisfaction as real, and perhaps deeper than his own, though not so joyous. Her large, lustrous eyes shone with

happiness, and her high, pale features were softened by feeling, and a profound sense of the goodness and kindness of her companion.

Rosa did not think herself a stupid person, or a very plain one; she was by no means excessively humble; but she thought Harold Blakeney far superior to her in all things. There was no worldliness about him, and he was the only person she had seen at Riversthwaite of whom she could say as much. Rosa felt exalted in her own eyes by his notice. Poor Rosa!

When dinner was announced, Mr. Blakeney had, of course, to leave Rosa for the post of honour beside Mrs. Clifden. Mr. Clifden equally of course, conducted Miss Cooper. Fanny and Rosa brought up the rear.

Fanny gave Rosa an intelligent glance, and they both looked in the direction of Robert and his companion. Wonderful to relate, Miss Cooper was speaking, and they were so near they could hear what she said.

"You are not much of a sportsman, I believe, Mr. Clifden," was her remark, in a soft,

meaningless voice, and turning towards him her slow, hazel eyes, in a manner which seemed meant to be winning and gracious.

"Not in the least. To shed blood at any time could never give me pleasure. I am not much by nature an animal of prey."

"You are so humane," she rejoined, in the same insipidly gracious manner.

They were now at table.

"Humane! Not in the least—I am not at all what people call humane. In spite of Miss Edgeworth, I can kill a spider, or a cockroach, or a wasp, or any other noxious creature, with the most perfect comfort. I have no objection to sheep and oxen and fowls and game being killed for my eating. But I have no delight in bloodshed for its own sake. If others choose so to amuse themselves I do not care. I am not in the least constitutionally humane. I am sorry to lower myself in your opinion, Miss Cooper; but truth compels me to do so." He spoke lightly, seemingly, but with the same icy polish which made Rosa always feel uncertain that he

declared his real sentiments. And yet she could not fancy him insincere. She rather supposed him unfeeling, supercilious, and conceited.

"Ah," said Miss Cooper, " You may choose to say you are not, but we may still keep our own opinion. Do you think Mr. Clifden humane, Miss Grey ? "

This question took Rosa quite by surprise, and she found it the more awkward and difficult to answer that Robert's eyes were instantly turned towards her and he seemed to await her reply—not precisely with anxiety, but with a sort of calm curiosity. Rosa coloured and hesitated and finally answered :

" I do not quite know what you mean by humane. Mr. Clifden has defined the extent of his own humanity." *

Robert Clifden's eyes were removed.. It would have been impossible to say from his countenance whether or not he was satisfied.

" Oh," said Miss Cooper with a sort of disdainful surprise, yet without moving a muscle of her pretty passionless features, " I thought

for my part everybody knew what was the meaning of humane. It is quite a common word."

" You must excuse Rosa, my dear Louisa," said Mrs. Clifden, who did not at all understand what the discussion was about, but had merely gathered that Rosa did not comprehend something Miss Cooper had said; " she has seen nothing of the world, and besides being little more than a child, has not of course had your advantages of education. Rosa, remember another time not to say you do not understand what persons say to you. It shows either a want of politeness, or it displays your own ignorance, which you ought always to avoid doing. You can seek for information in private."

As his aunt finished speaking, Robert Clifden seemed for an instant as if he would have said something, but he was anticipated by Mr. Blakeney.

" There are different kinds of humanity—one shown towards animals—another towards the physical wants of human beings, and a third

towards their feelings. I have known a man who was merciful in the extreme to his dogs and horses, be positively callous to the sufferings of his poorer neighbours, while I have met with another to whom no tale of privation or bodily suffering could be told in vain, who could yet in the most barbarous and apparently indifferent manner wound the *feelings* of those around him. Different things may be meant by the word *humane*."

Rosa looked gratefully at Mr. Blakeney. The young man's eyes met hers with a bright, gratified glance. Rosa thought him far superior to any person present—better, handsomer than anybody she had ever seen. Mr. Robert Clifden answered his last speech.

" Frequently the kind of inhumanity of which you have last spoken proceeds only from ignorance. The ills of the body are visible, and therefore easily understood by all. The ills of the mind are unseen and may be irritated unconsciously."

" But," cried Rosa, forgetting in the interest

of the argument her resolution not to speak, and even her habitual dislike to speak to Mr. Robert Clifden, "humanity teaches us instinctively where we shall wound." As soon as the words had passed her lips she was sorry she had spoken lest she should bring on herself another reproof, or have afforded Mr. Robert Clifden an opening to make her feel her dependent position. If she had, however, he did not take advantage of it. The same faint flush which Rosa had noticed before and which she now attributed to displeasure passed quickly over his countenance, and he answered, pointedly addressing her :

"Excuse me, Miss Grey, but I don't think you state the matter correctly. Humanity, as an instinct, leads us to pour in the balm wherever the wound is perceived. The perception of it is another and an intellectual rather than a moral quality. If you will reflect for an instant you will see what I mean."

Robert Clifden spoke with the same cold and ceremonious manner he had always shown to

Rosa—a manner which she had fancied meant to indicate offence and disapprobation. She was now much astonished that he should condescend to argue with her at all, nay, seem so desirous to convince her, though she still thought that his tone denoted that he was displeased with her. She replied,

“I do perceive and partly agree with you. Still I think the perception of feelings in another is not altogether due to the intellect. It is through our own feelings, in a great measure, that we see the sorrows of others, as well as compassionate them. Sympathy is quick-sighted.”

Robert Clifden only answered by his quick, expressive glance, which seemed, however, to have in it this time rather more than usual of surprise.—Mrs. Clifden again spoke with reprobating loftiness :

“Rosa—Rosa. Surely you are not venturing to disagree with Robert”—Robert himself interrupted her, colouring more decidedly than Rosa had ever seen him before.

"My dear aunt, pray do not forget that this is a free country, where all men and women have a legal right to their own opinion."

"A *legal* right, perhaps, still it is far from becoming in many cases to do what is legal."

"Not where the thing done is right in itself, and where the person is perfectly competent to do it." Robert spoke with that cheerful deference which was his invariable manner towards his aunt.

Miss Cooper, meanwhile, did not appear to relish the conversation, or to understand in the least what it was all about, though her own question had given rise to it, and she, moreover, felt that she was not, as she always conceived to be her right, the chief object of attention. She therefore claimed once more the conversation of Mr. Clifden, asking him if he had heard the new opera when he was in London. Robert had heard it. He had gone with some ladies, relations of his own. Miss Cooper then entered into some commonplace criticism of the piece, retailed from the London drawing-rooms. Not

one original word did she give utterance to, not one sentiment which seemed to be the result of thought or taste in herself, yet the whole was delivered with perfect self-possession and self-complacency, and in the blissful ignorance that any opinion could be more profound, or any conversation more interesting than her own. Rosa was surprised at the suavity and liveliness of Mr. Clifden's manner, as he listened to her, for she felt convinced that he was too intelligent a person to be really interested in anything so insipid. There was only one way, she thought, of accounting for it, and that was by supposing that he was paying his addresses to Miss Cooper. Not that he looked in the least like a lover, or even like an admirer. It was merely perfect, self-possessed, cheerful politeness, not devotion in the least that he exhibited. This was exactly the way, however, in which Rosa had supposed his courtship would proceed, and that it was a courtship she did not doubt.

As soon as the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, Miss Cooper subsided into utter si-

lence. She half reclined in a studied attitude in the corner of a *chaise-longue* on a heap of cushions, playing with the tassel of one of them, her fair features as still as those of a statue, and her eyes, though evidently not from the abstraction of thought, seeming to see nothing, except, perhaps, the cushion tassel. Mrs. Clifden sat in her usual seat. Rosa felt certain that had Miss Cooper been any other young person than the heiress of Viewlands, she would have disapproved exceedingly of her easy, *nonchalant* proceedings, but Louisa, like Robert, was privileged to do what she pleased.

Mrs. Clifden herself did not seem inclined for conversation. She had sat silent and upright, but with a cushion at her back, doing some ornamental work. Miss Wills chatted volubly to Rosa in a subdued tone, praising the room, and the furniture, and the grounds. She then entered into a discussion on novels, of which she was a devourer, but in which she had a better taste inselection than Mrs. Clifden. The feeling, the sentiment, the romance of the story were not

thrown away on Fanny Wills. There was nothing very clever or very profound in her remarks, but they were lively and amusing, and could by no means be called stupid. The two gentlemen were not long in joining the ladies. The fair statue on the *chaise longue*, like the vocal Memnon at sunrise, instantly gave signs of animation, by permitting the music of her voice to be heard once more.

“Have you seen that charming new dance yet, Mr. Clifden—the——” naming a dance which had just come into vogue.

“No, I have not,” he answered, seating himself near her, and entering into the same kind of chat they had had at dinner.

Mrs. Clifden now asked Miss Wills to play on the piano. Mr. Blakeney opened the instrument and set a chair for her; having accomplished those polite acts, he stationed himself once more beside Rosa, and took up the conversation where it had been broken off before dinner.

“You have no idea, Miss Grey, how difficult some parts of my duty appear to me. My pre-

'sent housekeeper is, I suspect, not a very trustworthy person, and yet so ignorant am I of the details of domestic management that I am never able to answer her arguments, which I feel convinced in a vague manner might easily be refuted, and yet, which from want of knowledge on the part of my sex, only a lady could answer. Then that clothing society, and the girls' department in the school, not to mention innumerable affairs of daily occurrence, I am quite at a loss about. Only fancy my inspecting the work of the various candidates lately for the situation of sewing mistress. In a country parish, a clergyman without a wife can only do half his duty."

As Mr. Blakeney finished speaking his eye sought Rosa's, but was removed instantly. He coloured and so did she. Vague, wild ideas, which to Rosa seemed to unite the apparently incompatible nature of impossibilities and probabilities, bewildered and excited her. It was many minutes ere she could lift her face again, and a similar embarrassment seemed to

have affected her companion. But he more quickly recovered, and then his eye sparkled with satisfaction.

Miss Wills had now finished her performance on the piano, and Mrs. Clifden would, now that the gentlemen were present, have invited Miss Cooper to take her place, but noticing that the heiress was still conversing with her nephew, she said to Rosa—

“Now you will play, Rosa. Play that German air I heard you practising the other day. You did not do it at all amiss.”

Rosa of course obeyed, but in a sort of mechanical fashion. She seemed at the moment to breathe in an unreal world. The now familiar drawing-room seemed like a place in a dream—the heavy gold cornices, the large mirrors, the bright fire, the glittering chandelier, the figure of Miss Cooper on the *chaise longue*, the cold, pale features of Robert Clifden, seemed all like visions round which floated the misty atmosphere of sleep. The ground she trod on seemed unreal.

Mr. Blakeney hastened to the piano as if to

open it, but it was already open, chair and lights just as Miss Wills had left them. Rosa played without the book, so there were not even leaves to turn over. Nevertheless, Mr. Blakeney remained standing by her, almost bending over her. Poor Rosa! her head seemed to turn round, sense and memory seemed to forsake her; her hands appeared to become stiff and powerless; she played at random—it was mere chance if she played right.

"Rosa," cried Mrs. Clifden, "you are playing quite out of time, and the last was a false note. My dear, you must learn not to be so careless."

Rosa, partly in distress, partly in confusion, looked round and again caught Mr. Blakeney's countenance fixed on hers. This time he was not embarrassed. He smiled at her, and did not withdraw his glance. Then as she went on with her performance, he whispered—

"Never mind, Miss Grey. It is the most beautiful music *I* ever heard."

As soon as Miss Wills and Rosa had with-

drawn to their room—for Mrs. Clifden had granted the request of the former—Fanny exclaimed, taking Rosa by both the hands and looking with her glancing eyes straight into the face of the latter—

“ Oh you sly thing ! You did not tell me I should have the interest of watching the progress of two love affairs.”

Rosa coloured to the temples. The spell was broken. The word she had not dared to say to herself had been pronounced by another. She stammered and blushed, and finally hiding her face on Fanny’s shoulder, burst into tears. Fanny pressed Rosa warmly to her heart, kissed her, caressed her, told her to confide in her, and poor Rosa, softened by affection to which she had been long a stranger, cried,

“ Oh, do you think so ? do you really think so ? ”

“ I do really ; and I think you very fortunate, dear Rosa. Mr. Blakeney is a charming young man, so handsome, so popular, so much thought of—and very well off I believe ”

"And very clever, and very good, is he not?"

"He is very highly thought of in every way," repeated Fanny, with whom to be good and to be *highly thought of* were convertible terms. "You are so young to be married, dear Rosa. You may be quite proud."

"So I am—that is if Mr.—if you think he really cares for me. I may well be proud; he is so different, so superior to any one else."

Fanny looked at her and sighed. The lively expression had left her face and was replaced by the anxious one her features usually wore in repose.

"Why do you sigh so, dear Miss Wills?"

"Don't call me Miss Wills, Rosa—call me Fanny. I sigh at contrasting my fate with yours."

"Dear, dear Fanny, are you not happy?"

"I am a poor, lonely being, dear Rosa. I have been very unfortunate—nothing I have ever wished has come to pass. My youth, my happiness lies behind me—before me only lies a desert."

"How so, dear Fanny. You seem to me so happy to have a brother and sister while I have nobody."

"You are young, Rosa, and beautiful. So was I once, but I hope better things for you. I have a brother and sister and they are very kind to me—I am very fond of them, and I ought to be grateful, for many others are much worse off, still, Rosa, an old maid even in a home, if she be lucky enough to have one at all, is always the last person in the house, and in the world she is nothing, nobody."

"Oh, Fanny, do not say so. What we are can never depend only on our position. You are exactly the same as you are now, as if you were the wife of an earl. If you had ten thousand a year, if you were Mrs. Clifden of Riversthwaite, the honour you would meet with would not be paid to yourself but to your station."

"Dear Rosa, you are very young and very romantic, and know nothing of the realities of life. Your notions too, seem to me very republican."

"Republican—not in the least I assure you. I am too young, perhaps, to have an opinion, but I think a distinction of ranks must always be desirable, but the outward respect we are bound by good order to yield to those above us, is a very different thing from that homage of the heart we give to worth and intellect."

Here Rosa stopped, for she saw to her surprise that Fanny listened as one from whom her meaning was entirely concealed. But as Fanny's face still remained clouded, she tried another method of consolation :

"Dear Fanny! you are not, as you were saying, *nothing* to anybody. I have not known you long ; but your goodness, your sympathy, have made you dear to me already. If you have been as kind to others as you have been to me, I am sure many must love you."

"Oh people like me in a sort of way as they like anything that is or may be useful to them ; but, Rosa, nothing wins love from anybody but attractiveness. Be as good as you like, if you are not attractive, people may speak well of you

but they will give you no love. No, no, Rosa ; I know that from experience."

" I am sure, though I do not know from experience, I feel you must be wrong. Love of one kind it may not be in the power of mere goodness to command, but all other kinds it must—or love would not be worth having. But even if what you say is true, I would not mind—I would do without it." Rosa spoke with animation and energy, her eyes kindling with fervour.

" It is easy to speak, Rosa."

Rosa did not answer.

Still carried away by indignant impulse, it seemed to her that the difficulty of doing without it only rendered victory more glorious, and the endeavour more interesting. She wished that she might one day have it in her power, and it was not impossible, to show her new friend that though herself beloved, fortunate, and happy, she could esteem and honour, and love those on whom Fortune had not so smiled.

Fanny now re-commenced the conversation

in a more cheerful strain, asking Rosa if she had ever read Mrs. Hemans' poetry. Rosa had, and agreed with Fanny in admiring it. They had then a conversation on poetry in general, during which Fanny confessed she wrote verses herself and forced Rosa to acknowledge the same. A mutual promise of showing them to each other was the consequence of this confidence. Fanny proposed that they should do so at once, and Rosa discovered, somewhat to her astonishment, that Miss Wills always carried her poems with her. They were neatly written out in a volume bound in morocco. She read them aloud with no little pride and complacency. Of their merits, literary and poetical, it could only be said, there *have* been worse. The praise to which they were entitled was negative rather than positive. They were not absolutely ungrammatical, they were not absolutely nonsense, but their style was the baldest and most hackneyed and their meaning the weakest and most mawkish conceivable. Rosa found herself in a difficulty; she was evidently

expected to praise. She tried to evade the dilemma by comparing one with the other.

"I like the 'Urn of Hope' better than 'Love's Willow.' "

"I am glad you do. The Urn is my own favourite, except perhaps the 'Shadows of the Heart.' Do you know," in a tone of awe, "I have published some of them in the county newspapers."

"Have you indeed!" was all Rosa could say.

"And now, dearest," said Fanny, "do let me see yours." She spoke patronisingly, as if Rosa's could not possibly be compared with hers.

Before Fanny had read hers, Rosa had felt very diffident of allowing any eye but her own to see her compositions. She was now, however, wonderfully reassured, and taking a candle, glided away as noiselessly as possible to her own room for her manuscripts. Rosa's poetry was written on various loose scraps of paper. As she was returning with a handful, she was somewhat startled and discomposed to meet

Mr. Robert Clifden in the corridor. He seemed surprised to see her, and enquired hastily :

“ Nothing the matter I hope ? ”

“ No,” she answered, adding apologetically, “ Miss Wills wished to see something I had in my room.”

“ I beg pardon, I meant to make no impertinent enquiries ;” and with a bow Mr. Clifden was passing on, when he stopped and hesitated, as if to say something, then apparently changing his mind, went on his way.

It was with some diffidence, with a raised colour and a faltering voice, that Rosa began to read her productions, even to Fanny Wills, the nature of whose own compositions had not been such as to excite any absolutely overwhelming ideas of the superiority of her genius. But Fanny’s warm commendations encouraged her to proceed. She read with fluency and feeling. Rosa’s poetry was of an altogether different nature from Fanny’s. Crude, unpolished, and juvenile, and perhaps without remarkable originality either of thought or versification, it was eminently cha-

racterised by reality, and by a remarkable exemption in so young a writer from conventionalisms both of idea and expression. It seemed the real out-pouring of a fervent, sensitive, and affectionate heart. Its chief element of promise was a certain vigour of tone, opposed to that elegiac softness, and insubstantial melancholy which is often both the beauty and defect of feminine authorship. Not that there was any want of feeling in what Rosa wrote. On the contrary what there was, was deep and strong—too strong and too deep to be exhaled in the vapour of ohs and ahs, and commonplace lamentations over faded roses and withering leaves. Her thoughts, too, could be joyous as well as sad—thus showing a more complete nature—a healthier and more vigorous intellect.

Miss Wills, as I have said, was warm in her praise, and she praised exactly those pieces which contained the least merit. Fanny Wills' sympathies in literature were all with the commonplace order of sentiment. She advised Rosa to send her verses to the county paper. Rosa

did not seem to hail the idea with the delight her new friend expected.

"I think they would insert them," Fanny continued encouragingly.

"Perhaps they might, but I do not think I shall send them." In truth Rosa was prouder than Fanny. She had never till that moment contemplated, even in the most remote manner, the possibility of anything of hers appearing in print. She entertained the utmost veneration for authors in the abstract, and an exaggerated idea of their intellectual powers, as compared with those of the rest of the world, and she had never supposed anything she could write could equal the productions of a *real author*—a being concerning whom she had the most vague and stupendous idea. Had Rosa chanced to meet with an author at this early period of her life, she might possibly have had a sensation of surprise at seeing him eat and speak and look exactly like the world in general.

Not that Rosa participated in the vulgar notion with which stupid people console their

vanity for an inferiority which is only real because they feel it, that literary men and women are a set of quaint eccentricities in appearance and manner, whose chief use in society is to be stared at, and by their presence minister to the vanity of those whose principal glory lies not in any distinction they have attained themselves, but in the number of distinguished people with whom they exchange nods. Rosa's idea was not at all like this. In fact it was no distinct idea at all, but an author was in Rosa's imagination invested with a certain atmosphere of the heroic. Poor little ignorant Rosa ! Surely sometimes 'tis folly to be wise.

CHAPTER XII.

THE following morning found all the party much in the same spirits and manners as they had been the day before—Mrs. Clifden dignified, but evidently in great good humour ; Miss Cooper pretty, cold, motionless, unexceptionably dressed, and engrossing Robert's attention ; he cold and impassive as herself, but infinitely more intelligent, and with an air, Rosa rather thought in all he said, of despising in a grave, polite way, the mental powers of all by whom he was surrounded. Miss Wills chatted to any one who would listen to her, and Rosa

was for the most part wrapt in a tumultuous, anxious, agitated, but happy reverie. She had lain awake nearly all night. The only person whose proceedings had any interest for her sufficient to draw her mind away for a second from those hopes and wishes which had begun to engross it, was Mr. Robert Clifden. His conduct towards herself was a puzzle to her, and his manner and his looks towards her this morning were stranger even than usual. All the time he seemed to be attending to Miss Cooper, Rosa felt he was watching her with a curious, furtive, searching, glance, which now he always withdrew when he caught her eye, and not without something like a shade of embarrassment. Rosa felt somewhat uncomfortable under this scrutiny, and wondered what it could mean, but was too much occupied by deeper interests to think anxiously about it.

After breakfast, Mr. Robert Clifden vanished, and was seen no more till luncheon time. The ladies spent the morning, as it seemed to Rosa, rather tiresomely. Miss Wills found a novel

and ensconced herself in an easy chair. Mrs. Clifden worked at a magnificent pair of embroidered slippers, intended for her nephew. Miss Cooper, too, sat with work in her hand, in the half-reclining, studied attitude which appeared to be her favourite one, but she did not appear to be getting on even with the measured pace of Mrs. Clifden. The little, delicate, lace-looking fabric with which she feigned to be occupied, hung from her fair thin fingers as if it were a mere excuse for idleness. With her pretty, delicately-slipped foot she kept beating slowly on an embroidered footstool. Her eyes seemed to see nothing, or at least nothing they saw seemed to inspire them with a ray of intelligence, or a shadow of emotion. The fair features never changed. Not a hair was out of place in the stiff, straight, smooth, satiny bands which shaded her pretty, motionless face, nor in the braided coronet which surmounted them. She was like a fair wax figure, for her face had too much colour and too little character to be absolutely statue-like. She and Mrs. Clifden seemed equally well satisfied with unbroken silence.

Persons who are fond of long and perfect silence are usually either very deep thinkers, or they have so few ideas, that they are forced to silence from the sheer want of anything to say. To which of these classes Mrs. Clifden and Miss Cooper belonged I shall leave the reader to determine. Their "great talent for silence," was to Rosa incomprehensible and not at all agreeable.

If she, like Miss Wills, had dared to have taken refuge in the perusal of a novel she would not have minded, but stuck upon her usual, low, hard seat she found the crochetting of an anti-macassar for Mrs. Clifden's large round ottoman rather a dull employment, or at least she would have found it so had she not had abundant occupation for her mind in the events of the previous evening. But she felt restrained, even in her thoughts, in the presence of the two silent ladies. She longed to be able to rush out into the clear, frosty air and indulge in a solitary ramble beneath the glittering, blue sky. She was quite glad when Mrs. Clifden

at last sent her on an errand up stairs. As she was coming out of her aunt's room she saw Mr. Robert Clifden at the other end of the long corridor. He seemed to be waiting for something or somebody. Rosa had intended to go straight down stairs, but as this obliged her to pass the formidable Robert, about halfway down the passage she struck into the back staircase which led up to her own room. In about five minutes she returned, and perceiving that he was no longer there she fancied she had effected her purpose. But she was just passing the door of his room when he came out again.

"You seem to be in great haste," he said, not as if making a mere observation out of politeness, but as if he had some object in the remark.

"Yes—Mrs. Clifden wishes these skeins of silk."

"Another time then," he said with a bow, and the faint flush on his pale face which Rosa had already once or twice remarked. There

was something in his manner which she was in doubt whether to attribute to embarrassment or displeasure, though she fancied it must be the latter. And then what could he mean by "another time?" Could he have anything to say to her? She mentally resolved to avoid meeting Mr. Robert Clifden alone for the future in case such should be his wish, for she felt convinced he could have nothing to say that she should like to hear. After about another hour's stately silence, the gong sounded for luncheon, and contrary to custom, Mr. Robert Clifden made his appearance at that repast. His aunt smiled on him benignly, as she knew his presence augured an intention of devoting himself to her guests for the afternoon. How they were to amuse themselves was the matter to be decided upon. As the weather was remarkably fine, it was decided they were to go out, but whether to ride, drive, or walk, was the question.

"I shall not go I think," said Mrs. Clifden.
"The day feels a little colder than I like for

driving, so if you take the carriage, there will be room for Rosa."

"We must have Rosa," said Fanny Wills.

"Certainly," said Robert Clifden, "everybody must go who feels inclined."

"I do not like driving in such cold weather," said Miss Cooper.

"Should you like better to ride, my dear?" asked Mrs. Clifden.

"Much better I think."

"I am afraid," said Robert Clifden, "there are not horses for us all, and the ground is too hard for riding."

"We had better stay in the house then and play at bagatelle, or battledore, or something of that kind."

"Should you not like a walk, Miss Cooper? this is just the weather for walking, bright, clear, dry, and bracing."

Now Miss Cooper did not like walking. She was too lazy to enjoy the exercise for its own sake, and she had no opportunity, as in riding, of showing her fine figure and accomplished

horsemanship. Louisa Cooper was one of those persons who have little or no enjoyment either in nature, or in any accomplishment or employment for its own sake. The chief aim of her existence was her own aggrandizement, and her chief pleasure the indulgence of her indolence, or the pampering of her vanity. She had almost an unbounded idea of her own claims to admiration and distinction, and from the altitude of her beauty, wealth, and station, was apt to look down with contempt on the rest of her sex.

Yet Miss Cooper was not exactly what is usually meant by the term, "an unamiable girl." She was too thoroughly satisfied with her own advantages to indulge much in detraction. She rarely gossipped, talked scandal, or made mischief. She cared too little about other people to talk about them.

Mrs. Clifden and her nephew were the only persons in her visiting circle whom she considered it worth while to conciliate.

The former had long established her title to

be the chief person in the neighbourhood, and Robert Clifden, as the possessor of a considerable property in his own right, and heir presumptive of the broad lands of Riversthwaite, seemed by birth, fortune, age, and situation, marked out as the most suitable match for the beautiful, wealthy, and well-born Louisa Cooper. It was true that Miss Cooper with her many advantages had an undoubted right to aspire to a title; but few men of title have as long a pedigree as Robert Clifden, and not many a longer rent-roll. Then the advantages of consolidating the Rivers-thwaite and Viewlands estates were apparent, even to the understanding of the fair heiress, while she could appreciate the reputation for talents enjoyed by Mr. Clifden, though the talents themselves without the reputation might have been to her invisible. But to return to my narrative. Miss Cooper did not give her usual ready assent to what Mr. Clifden proposed with regard to the walk.

"It is so cold for walking," she said, with an insipid smile intended to be sweet.

Robert Clifden smiled too in an icy, inscrutable way, and answered with courtly devotion—

“ It is certainly, as you justly observe, Miss Cooper, very cold, but walking is an exercise more likely to warm us than any other. Do allow me to recommend it to you. I am certain you will enjoy it. You will feel your spirits rise at every step.”

She still appeared to hesitate though evidently flattered by his manner. He continued;

“ Moreover, as I have already said, we cannot all ride, and I feel assured, Miss Cooper would not condemn any one to a solitary walk.”

Miss Cooper was obliged to look amiable against her will. She had not fancied that Robert Clifden would have cared what became of so insignificant a person as Rosa. She was still more surprised when he added,

“ Though I am confident that I advise you for your comfort and pleasure, I am afraid I cannot quite conceal the selfishness of at least one of my motives, as I of course should be the solitary left behind.”

"Oh no," cried Rosa, like Miss Cooper hardly understanding him, and much puzzled to account for his conduct; "I never ride at any time."

"A conclusive reason then, why we should walk; as of course no lady is to be left behind."

"Unless we were to play bagatelle," again suggested Miss Cooper, the feigned smile and the real frown contending which should obtain possession of her countenance.

"I am quite sure, Miss Cooper, even you would find it too great an act of self-denial to remain in the house the whole of so brilliant a day as this. Do allow me to have the pleasure of showing you our beautiful cascade, which never looks to me more exquisite than in its wintry aspect, when the mossy rocks are covered with hoar-frost and adorned by glittering stalactites. I assure you, you would imagine yourself in fairy-land."

Miss Cooper condescended to be pleased and flattered, and with her usual satisfied composure went to prepare for her walk. As soon as they

had left the house, Robert attached himself to her. Neither by word nor look did he pay the slightest attention to Rosa. His conduct to her had certainly been kind, but she could not feel so grateful to him as she wished. It amused her to remark throughout the walk how calmly, how politely, yet how resolutely Robert contrived to have his own way about everything. Firm, cold, and gentle, it seemed to her that even in trifles he was the most determined of human beings. Not that his determination was ever expressed as such. It was shown merely by a calm and pertinacious adherence to the point, all the time that he had an air of doing so, entirely for the advantage of others and with an appearance of perfect willingness to concede it if his own comfort only had been in question.

On their way to the waterfall they were met by Mr. Blakeney, whose cheeks coloured and whose eyes grew bright with pleasure as he beheld them, calling into Rosa's face a deeper glow and perchance into her eyes a corresponding brightness; but one could not see them, for some

consciousness, as Mr. Blakeney glided to her side, had caused her to fix them intently on the earth. He spoke to her in a lowered tone though it was only about the weather. He, too, seemed nervous. Fanny Wills would have walked away, but Rosa, who had an instinctive consciousness of her intention, held her firmly by the arm. Although there was no one in the world whose society Rosa loved as she did that of Harold Blakeney, she shrank from being alone with him. Thus they walked, Rosa, Fanny, and Mr. Blakeney first, Robert and Miss Cooper at some distance behind. Miss Cooper appeared to require an enormous amount of attention. It fatigued her to carry her muff, and Robert politely offered to take it for her. Then she dropped her handkerchief, which he politely picked up, and requested to know if he might bear it also as a proof, that she had chosen him for her knight for the time.

She smiled with sweet insipidity ; but said nothing, not from bashfulness, but from utter poverty of mind and perfect self-satisfaction.

She believed that Robert Clifden was desperately in love with her, and determined that when she should be his wife, she would not permit him to sacrifice her convenience or her whims to politeness to an insignificant dependent like Rosa, to whom, because she had been the means of thwarting her, she had taken as great a dislike as her indolent disposition was capable of conceiving. They were now at the waterfall. It was indeed a pretty scene.

Between two high hills forming a deep ravine flowed, or ought to have *flowed*, a mountain torrent, but though swift and strong, it was bound by the cold grip of the frost into a bed of sparkling ice. High above it rose the dark, steep rocks, over which stood out against the blue sky, one or two motionless jagged pines. Our party approached the fall from beneath. The water took three leaps over the rocks, the last of which was broken by myriads of smaller rocks and stones. But the life of the fall was gone for the present. Instead of the foaming, glancing waters ever leaping madly over the

precipice, and rushing on their wild career into the shady wood beneath, long, still, glittering icicles hung from the rocks, the green mosses were encrusted with frostwork, the icy current gleamed through the bare branches, and the silence of death reigned over the whole landscape. Rosa, even in the present excited state of her feelings, was impressed and solemnised by it. She stood still to admire.

"The finest view," said Robert Clifden, "is from midway, up that path by the side of the fall. Shall I help you, Miss Cooper, to go up?"

"Oh no, I thank you. It looks so steep and slippery. I dare say it is very pretty in summer, but these icicles look so odd, and there are no leaves on the trees."

"True; you are quite right. The icicles have their own peculiar beauty, which is, of course, what you mean by their being odd; and though, doubtless, the trees have a more luxuriant loveliness in their summer depth of shade, still, they now display a certain symmetry of form and

elegance of structure which teach us that the absence of one kind of beauty may serve to make manifest another; and all this besides the moral associations they possess connected with the change of season, the annual death of nature, the prospect of its annual resurrection, and the glorious analogy these bear to the mysterious fate of man, and to his dearest and most glorious hopes."

Robert's pale face and clear blue eyes brightened as he spoke, with cold, intellectual light. It was a light—it seemed to Rosa—which had neither warmth or glow—the wintry flash of the northern Aurora. Miss Cooper, meanwhile, looked as if he had paid her a compliment. She did not in the least understand what he had been saying, but she felt certain it must be a compliment, and that was all she cared about. And in truth, Robert's manner was exactly that of one who pays a compliment, polite and respectful. The rest of the party, even, were somewhat puzzled to know his real meaning.

Rosa was now ascending the cliff by the rugged, slippery path which Mr. Clifden had indi-

cated. Mr. Blakeney had preceded her for the purpose of assisting her by giving her his hand that she might pull herself up by it. All at once, setting her foot on some loose earth, to which a crust of ice had given the appearance of rock, but which was not hard enough to bear her weight, it gave way and she fell over the cliff. Horror struck instantaneously to the hearts of all present. Fanny Wills and Miss Cooper screamed. Robert Clifden darted towards where she fell, while Mr. Blakeney leapt precipitately down the cliff after her. Robert's first dreadful thought, for he was the only person present who could be said to have thought at all on the occasion, was that she might have fallen on the stream where the ice was thin, and getting beneath be carried away out of their reach. But to his inexpressible satisfaction she was caught in her descent by the projecting branch of an oak, which grew out of the bank and overhung the fall. A moment's glance, however, shewed him that even if she had escaped any serious injury in her descent she was yet far from safe,

as the branch by which she was suspended bent, and seemed as if it would break beneath her weight.

"Stop," cried Robert Clifden in a tone of command, as Harold Blakeney, who was a bold and clever cragsman, with almost supernatural swiftness and agility, was approaching her from above. He halted for a second, and indignant at the interruption, was proceeding rapidly onwards, when Robert cried again with eagerness and agitation,

"Stop, for God's sake, or you are both lost. The tree will not bear your weight." Again Harold Blakeney paused, and perceived what he had not done before, that Robert had spoken justly.

"What is to be done?" he asked, for though rash, prompt, and physically brave, his presence of mind was not so ready in danger as that of Robert, and when he did think, his *moral* courage and his self-reliance were not so great. With wonderful calmness and self-possession, yet with a blanched cheek and an eye bright

with anxiety, Robert Clifden gave him the necessary directions, told him how he could descend and get under the tree, so as to save her if the branch should break in the endeavour to disengage her from it.

"I shall be beside you to give you all the aid in my power, but you are rather stronger, and have more firmness of nerve than I have."

Harold saw at once that Robert was right. With some difficulty, and not without several cuts and bruises, he made his way to the place the latter indicated, and detached Rosa from the branch, which gave way as he received her in his arms. He staggered for an instant under the sudden weight, but Robert was there to save him from a fall. Together they bore her carefully down the remainder of the precipice and laid her on a Scotch plaid, which Fanny Wills had thoughtfully taken off herself and spread above the cold, frosty ground.

Rosa was quite senseless. Mr. Blakeney threw himself down beside her, and pressing her cold hands in his, cried in anguish—

"Rosa, dear, sweet, Rosa. Oh heaven ! she cannot be dead."

Robert Clifden had, in the meantime, with the gentleness of a woman removed her bonnet, and was examining her head.

"There is no serious injury here that I can perceive. I trust she has only fainted. Miss Wills, throw some water on her face." Fanny did so at once and in a few seconds Rosa opened her eyes. She did not speak at first, not till Mr. Blakeney had exclaimed—

"She is living, thank God ! Rosa ! Oh tell me if you are much hurt."

Rosa felt stunned, bewildered ; yet in the midst of it all, strangely, wildly happy. She hardly knew where she was ; there was a strange confusion in her head. She had no distinct idea only a lively impression that Harold Blakeney's bright eyes were fixed on her with an expression of the most anxious emotion, while his tones, even his words, were full of tenderness. Yet she did not feel discomposed as she would have done at another time.

"I have fainted," she said, addressing him, and her tone bespoke the softness and gratitude of her heart; but I am quite well again now. How was it? I do not recollect. Did I fall?"

"You fell over the cliff," said Fanny Wills, "and Mr. Blakeney ran down after you. He and Mr. Clifden brought you down from the tree in which you had mercifully been caught."

"You saved my life!" cried Rosa, her eyes turned to Mr. Blakeney, "you risked your life for me!"

"I would have died for you," he answered passionately.

It was too much bliss. For some seconds Rosa did not speak or move. Then she suddenly sat up. Acute pains darted through every part of her body. She grew sick and dizzy, and calling out "Fanny I am going to faint again," sank back and was caught by Mr. Blakeney.

"She must be taken home," said Robert Clifden; "God grant she may have sustained no serious injury. You and Miss Wills take care

of her while I return and bring back the carriage."

"And send to Ellerdale for the surgeon," added Harold.

"Right," said Robert, and was rising to go, when Miss Cooper, who all this time had held aloof, now approached them, saying, "As Miss Wills and Mr. Blakeney do not require my assistance I think I had better go home too. My nerves are so shaken and I am so cold. The agitation has made me quite ill. I should not wonder if I had a fever. I always feel those things so much. I do not know how I shall ever get back, I feel so weak."

"In that case," said Mr. Clifden, "you had much better wait for the carriage, as from what you say, your sufferings seem to be as great as Miss Grey's. In the meantime if you will do me the honour to wrap yourself up in my upper coat, I think it will protect you from the cold." As he spoke he took it off, and wrapped it round Miss Cooper, who, at this mark of his attention appeared to recover the usual cold placidity of

her manner, which had been not a little ruffled by having so long been apparently forgotten by everybody.

Robert hastened away without his coat, directing, as he went, one cold, keen, instantaneous glance of his eye towards Miss Cooper. He almost ran home, taking a short cut by the lawn. His aunt saw him from the windows and met him at the door.

Mrs. Clifden was a woman by no means devoid of feeling in certain cases.

"What is the matter?" she said in alarm.

Robert in a few words related what had occurred, ringing the bell as he did so, and on Watkins entering, ordering the carriage, and a person to be sent off to Ellerdale for the surgeon.

"Thank God it is no worse," said Mrs. Clifden, with some fervour, and evident relief.

"How very foolish and rash of Rosa to go up the cliff when it was so slippery."

"You must not blame Rosa. It was entirely my fault. I advised her to go, and I well deserve to be scolded for my folly."

" You are always such a generous, candid creature, my dear Robert. But what have you done with your upper coat. Surely you have not been so foolish as to take it off for Rosa?"

" Not for Rosa ; for Miss Cooper."

Mrs. Clifden could not conceal her satisfaction. She added however, anxiously, " I trust you have not got cold. I *almost* wonder she took it."

" And I *quite* wonder," he rejoined, turning away, for the carriage was now at the door.

Mrs. Clifden was not a nice discriminator of tones, but something struck her uncomfortably in her nephew's last speech. She assured herself, however ; " With all Robert's politeness, he would never have run such a risk if he had not thought of paying his addresses to her."

Mrs. Clifden now rang the bell, and gave orders that Miss Wills' bed should be prepared for Miss Grey. She also ordered Springer to be in attendance.

CHAPTER XIII.

ERE long the carriage returned, containing the three ladies. Rosa, evidently in great pain, was lifted out by Watkins, assisted by one or two of the other servants. Shortly afterwards the two gentlemen and Mr. Hicks the surgeon arrived. Miss Cooper immediately sank into a chair in the hall as if she were fainting, and asked for her maid. She expected that Robert Clifden would have come to her aid, but he did not. While Mrs. Clifden, Miss Wills, Springer, and the surgeon had gone up stairs with Rosa, he and Mr. Blakeney had withdrawn

to a window and were talking over the details of the accident, partly to conceal and partly to divert the anxiety they felt for Mr. Hicks' report of the sufferer. Robert dreaded some internal injury. His face was pale and steadfast. Mr. Blakeney on the contrary was restless and excited. His dark eyes shone with feverish anxiety. At last Miss Cooper could no longer endure being so completely in the background.

"Mr. Clifden," she said, "will you be so good as look for my vinaigrette, I left it on one of these tables this morning."

"Certainly," he said, and in a few seconds he brought it to her.

"Thank you. I feel so faint. My nerves are so shaken. I always feel these things so much—so much more than other people. There is nothing I envy so much as insensibility."

"I am sure you need not," Robert answered with the politest air in the world.

"Ah you may say so," she replied, supposing

he meant a compliment, "but I assure you such feelings as mine are not enviable."

" You need not assure me. I fully believe it. What would have become of Miss Grey if we had all felt as you do."

" I feel I was not made for the common ways and actions of life."

" No. You are quite right. The drawing-room is your place just as it is the place of that beautiful china ornament on the buhl cabinet there. It is one of the most exquisite things I ever saw ; but it could never contain refreshment for the weary or medicine for the sick. It is so very lovely and delicate that I doubt if it would even hold flowers."

As he finished speaking, Mr. Hicks returned, Harold Blakeney sprang to meet him. Robert did not move, but looked eagerly at his face. Miss Cooper asked—

" Could you recommend me anything instead of aromatic vinegar ? I am so sick of it." Then as if she had just remembered—" Oh ! how is Miss Grey ? "

"Tell us at once!" cried Harold Blakeney.

As quickly as he could, Mr. Hicks gave the welcome intelligence that Rosa had sustained no dangerous injury. There was no fracture anywhere, no fear of her being maimed or deformed in any way. There had been a slight—a very slight concussion of the brain, he thought, but nothing material, and she was much bruised.

She would probably suffer a good deal for the next few days, but he trusted she might be quite well in a fortnight or three weeks.

"Oh thank God!" cried Harold Blakeney with animated fervour."

"Thank God indeed," echoed Robert Clifden, in a calm, earnest tone.

"I shall walk over tomorrow to hear how she is going on." said Mr. Blakeney preparing to take leave with the doctor.

"You are going to Liverpool in a day or two, are you not?" said Robert Clifden; "if you should like to hear of Miss Grey, I will write you a few lines to let you know how she is going on."

"Thank you; but I shall not leave Ellerdale quite so soon. I regard myself as partly the cause of the accident and I shall not go till she is at least able to be down stairs. I must satisfy myself she is not injured."

Mr. Hicks' opinion proved correct. Rosa suffered a great deal of pain, and for a day or two was even feverish; but in less than a week she began to improve. A day or two after the accident, Miss Cooper returned home. Miss Wills was also to have gone; but she had shown herself so useful and so kind to Rosa, that Robert suggested to his aunt that she had better be invited to remain a little longer. Miss Wills as well as Rosa was delighted. Fanny Wills was an excellent nurse. Nothing could exceed her assiduity and kindness. Rosa clung to her with the most grateful affection. She brought her also a message from Mr. Blakeney every day, and though these messages were generally mere enquiries and couched in the most commonplace language, they were the joy of poor Rosa's life, and made her pain seem almost

pleasure, and the grey winter days brighter than the brightest summer sunshine. She had not thought she could ever be so happy again. The

“Hues borrowed from the heart”

which wrapped all her world in their own soft “glow,” extended their benign influence even to Mrs. Clifden and her nephew. She began to accuse herself of having judged them harshly. They were not indeed like Fanny Wills or Mr. Blakeney: but they had omitted no substantial kindness. Medical advice, medicine, attendance, every necessary kindness had been provided for her. Once or twice during the day Mrs. Clifden came to enquire for her, and Miss Wills had told her that Robert was constantly asking about her progress, and thinking of things she might like. She more especially regretted what had passed between her and the latter. She felt that his late conduct had shown considerable magnanimity and great humanity. She still did not think his manners to her had been what they ought to have been; but she accused

herself now of want of temper, and longed to show Mr. Clifden that she was not insensible to his present kindness.

In about a fortnight she was able to be carried down stairs and was laid on a sofa in the drawing-room. Robert was in the room reading, when she was brought in. He rose instantly, adjusted the pillows, and helped Miss Wills and Watkins to place her comfortably, saying as he did so :

“ We are truly glad, Miss Grey, to see you down once more. Let me hope that you do not now suffer much pain.”

He spoke with grave deference ; but his politeness towards Rosa had neither the same ease nor the same icy grace as towards Miss Cooper. If it were possible for Mr. Robert Clifden to be awkward, he was almost so now. Rosa imagined he disliked her, and all her intentions of showing him greater cordiality were frustrated at once. His reserve and coldness were communicated to her. She fancied he paid her attention from a sense of duty and she could

not help imagining also, that in its punctiliousness there was some anger against her, felt, if not acknowledged. She thanked him ceremoniously, said she felt only stiff and weak, and begged she might not incommod him. He withdrew again to his book and his table, again looking, as she thought, relieved at his release.

All this time Mrs. Clifden had not, of course, risen from her seat; but she spoke kindly and condescendingly, yet with a touch more of respect than she had ever shown before. For the first time she appeared to consider Rosa almost as a grown-up person. Finally, she informed her that Mr. Blakeney was coming to dinner. Mrs. Clifden, as she spoke, regarded Rosa steadfastly. Poor Rosa felt the blood mount to her temples.

" You are a good girl, Rosa," said Mrs. Clifden with infinite condescension, and with just enough of a smile not to impair her dignity or to border on a jest, of which she had a horror.
" You are very womanly for your age."

Fanny Wills smiled broadly; Robert Clifden was so much engrossed by his book that he did

not appear to hear what had passed. Shortly afterwards Mr. Blakeney was announced. Rosa glanced at him for a second as he entered the room and then turned away her eyes, colouring to the temples. Never had Harold Blakeney looked handsomer or more attractive. He was slightly embarrassed, but only sufficiently so to give a glow to his countenance and sensibility to his manner. He shook hands with everybody before he approached the sofa on which Rosa lay. The manner of both was conscious and embarrassed as they shook hands, and neither looked at the other. There was no chair near, and he stood beside her as if uncertain whether or not to remain—saying something in a low tone about being glad to see her down again. Rosa wished anxiously to thank him for, as she believed, saving her life, but she could find at that moment neither words nor courage. The announcement of dinner was a relief to both. Rosa was not to dine with the party in the dining-room; she had had her invalid early dinner already.

Dinner at Riversthwaite Hall was always a long, solemn affair. More than an hour had elapsed before Mrs. Clifden and Fanny returned. Rosa had employed the interval in endeavouring to calm her mind and to nerve herself to express her gratitude to Mr. Blakeney. The gentlemen did not remain a quarter of an hour after the ladies. Mr. Blakeney drew a chair close to her at once, and sat down.

" You will be able to walk in another week I trust," he said with much interest and some embarrassment.

" In less I trust," Rosa replied in extreme confusion.

" I am going to leave home tomorrow," he continued. " I should not have gone until you were perfectly restored, had it not been almost necessary. I had promised to go on the day after your accident, but of course I could not then, and now I must." His voice as he spoke was slightly tremulous.

Miss Wills had now of her own accord sat down to the piano. Robert Clifden was en-

grossed with his book, while his aunt was at work with steady industry.

The sofa on which Rosa reclined stood in the shade, some distance back from the fire and the table. Mr. Blakeney had drawn his chair close to it. He stopped after his last speech, and his eyes met Rosa's for a second. She did not answer, for in truth she could not. Her fingers worked nervously with the tassel of the cushion, and her colour came and went, while her attention appeared to be entirely absorbed by the pattern of the damask on the back of the sofa. She did not see her companion's face, but she could hear his heart beat audibly.

At last he looked round the room, and seeing that they were screened from observation, he continued,

"The time will seem like ages to me, even though it is to be spent with my own family." Rosa could still make no rejoinder, and after a short pause, he resumed with increasing agitation. "If I dared to hope that—that I might be remembered by you, it would seem less ter-

rible." He looked at her eagerly and anxiously. She tried to speak, but her dry and heavy tongue refused its office. He appeared, however, to have taken some encouragement, perhaps from her countenance, for he drew from his little finger a ring containing one fine brilliant, saying,

"Will you wear this as a slight—as—" he did not finish his sentence; but gently taking her hand, which she neither withdrew nor gave, he put it on her finger, whispering as he did so, "Dear Rosa."

A pause in Miss Wills' performance made him start. He drew back his chair a few inches. But Fanny was only looking for a piece of music. As soon as she found it she began to play more determinedly than ever. Mr. Blakeney spoke again, but though still in a low tone, more audibly and with more self-possession than before.

"My mother is to return with me. I shall be so happy to introduce you to her. You will like her, I am sure. You will suit exactly."

"I hope we shall. I shall like so much to see your mother."

"She is an excellent person—so warm-hearted and so clever; it is quite astonishing what she does—not a moment of the day that she is not occupied in cares for her family."

Thus they continued to speak till they were interrupted by the entrance of tea. Harold Blakeney then rose, and he did not resume his position during the rest of the evening. After tea the conversation became general. It was not late when he took leave. He had some preparations to make, he said, for his journey.

As soon as he was gone Mrs. Clifden proposed that Rosa should go to bed. Rosa consented gladly. She longed to be freed from the restraint of Mrs. Clifden's and her nephew's presence, which seemed to affect the liberty even of her thoughts. Fanny Wills withdrew along with her. Mrs. Clifden and Robert were left alone. After a second or two's silence the former looked up from her work, saying:

"Robert, my dear, are you much occupied

with your book at present? I have had something to ask you for some days, but Rosa's illness and other things have prevented me hitherto from finding a proper opportunity."

"I am ready to listen," he answered, smiling, and closing the volume.

"I wished to ask you then, how you liked Louisa Cooper on further acquaintance. You seemed to get on well."

"It is a question I can answer in a very few words. I did not like her at all."

"My dear Robert! What objection can you have to a girl so extremely elegant and refined?"

"The surface may be very well, though even that I do not admire."

"Surely you cannot imagine there is any deceit—anything concealed—"

"No, ma'am. I do not complain of the presence of *anything*, but of the absence of *everything*—of mind and feeling, almost of common humanity."

"I am sure she showed a great deal of sensibility at the time of Rosa's accident."

"For herself perhaps, but none for anyone else. In short, my dear aunt, to settle the question for ever—if there was not another woman in the world I would not marry Louisa Cooper. As I told you when we last spoke upon the subject, I intended to choose a wife at a proper time, and for sensible reasons—and among them I consider absolutely necessary some understanding, and some feeling for other people. I should be sorry to marry a woman in whom there could not be the slightest possibility of finding a companion."

Time had been when Robert Clifden had not thought it possible that a woman could be a companion. Something had made him of another opinion, though he was hardly aware he had not always thought as he now did.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE than a week had elapsed. Rosa had now almost recovered, and was able to walk all over the house without assistance. Fanny Wills was gone home, and Riversthwaite was once more restored to its habitual state of dignified dullness and silent monotony.

Yet though to the eye of the common observer, all things wore precisely the same aspect they had on Rosa's first arrival, to her the monotony and dullness were no more. There was within a variety of thought and a brightness of hope, which invested every occurrence

with its own life and charm. The weather, too, had become almost spring-like. The snow-drops began to push their little white heads above the brown mould, and the tiniest buds to be visible on a few of the earliest trees and shrubs. Even the sadness with which Rosa looked back on the past, began, though not to be diminished, to be softened. Nay, the thoughts which had once been so agonizingly bitter, had now even their own melancholy pleasure, for "peace dwelt with the sad."

She was almost so entirely wrapped up in interests within herself, that she hardly remarked the actions and manners of those by whom she was immediately surrounded. Yet she did fancy sometimes that Mrs. Clifden was more cordial and less dictatorial than of old. She was no longer made to sit on the little hard chair, and she appeared to be considered almost grown up. Robert's manner was characterised by the same cold constraint and embarrassed politeness which had marked it ever since the morning in the breakfast-room, and which, had

it not been for his substantial kindness at the time of her accident, Rosa would have imagined an ungenerous way of punishing her for what she had then said. She sometimes wondered what sort of person he really was. At first she had been surprised to find how much he was liked by all his dependents and by the poorer classes in the neighbourhood, but further experience showed that the affection they bore him was only the natural result of his unwearied benevolence and his invariably courteous manners. As one poor woman said to Rosa, "Mr. Clifden was cold-like sometimes, but he never forgot what anybody was in want of, and he never said anything to hurt folks." Rosa wondered why she had been the exception. She was sorry now she had spoken as she did ; but even yet she could not think her words had been altogether unprovoked. It was disagreeable to live with one who disliked her so very much.

One morning, Rosa having finished her usual musical performance in the lumber room, had returned to the breakfast parlour, expecting to

find it occupied by Mrs. Clifden. But as on one previous occasion she found her nephew there instead.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "I did not know you were not in your own room this morning."

"There is no reason why I should not be—I have no work-people there to-day. Do not go, I beg. I shall only intrude on you for a few minutes."

Rosa stopped, but did not sit down. He went on in a tone which though cold was embarrassed.

"For many weeks I have wished for an opportunity to speak to you alone, but some trifling accident has always prevented me. This morning my aunt is with the gardener in the conservatory, and I knew I should meet you if I waited here." He paused as if for an answer; but Rosa made none. She merely waited with an air of attention and of surprise, increasing every moment. He continued, his pale face colouring slightly.

"Do you remember our last conversation alone, here?"

If he had flushed a little, she coloured all over with confusion.

"I—I do not wish to remember it, Mr. Clifden. I am very sorry it took place," and poor Rosa felt inclined to run away.

"I am not sorry, except for the conduct on my part which occasioned it, for which I have long felt that I owed you an apology, and myself an explanation." He spoke with less embarrassment, firmly and politely. Rosa also began to recover her self-possession. She saw that Mr. Clifden really meant what he said, and she listened with an air of respectful attention—conduct which raised her many degrees in the esteem of her companion. He would have felt annoyed, had she said, as many might have done in her place, "that it was of no consequence."

"The plain fact is, Miss Grey, that before you arrived I was led to think of you as a child—a girl of twelve or fourteen, and when you arrived your—your appearance which, (will you

kindly bear with the truth) prepossessed by this notion, I did not at first very much observe, confirmed the impression. I have never lived with young persons of your sex, and my notions of the age of fourteen were derived from my own. I blush with shame when I think of the construction you were so justly entitled to put upon my conduct, and yet it was not a correct construction. I did not for a moment fancy I could in any way be wounding your feelings, and, believe me, had you even been the child I took you for, I should have been equally scrupulous, had I thought I could have hurt you. To wound the feelings of any one, as I once heard you observe, is the worst kind of inhumanity ; and, if I know myself, I would perish rather than be guilty of it."

"I believe you," cried Rosa, her interest and admiration increasing every instant, and experiencing, as all generous minds do on discovering they have judged harshly, a revulsion of feeling, which inclined her to the opposite extreme, and made her desirous to atone for the wrong done even in thought.

"And I, too, have far more need than you have, to apologise for my want of charity and my dreadful want of temper. I ought, even if your conduct had been what I supposed it, to have remembered that I was your guest; that the obligations—"

"Obligations! Miss Grey. I beg your pardon," he cried eagerly, and with great embarrassment, his whole face colouring as she had never seen it before, and the coldness and indifference of his tone and manner entirely disappearing. "You are under no obligations to *me*—none whatever. We are equally guests of my aunt, Mrs. Clifden. Out of her affection for me she *has* made me not only nominally, but really the master of her house; but it is *her* house, not mine. In every respect we are on equal grounds, except that you are a woman and a lady, and as such, I owe you the respect and consideration which, when a man neglects to render, he is no gentleman."

Rosa did not answer; but the delicacy of mind which had prompted his whole speech did not escape her. After a short pause, Robert

Clifden again spoke, more in his ordinary tone of voice,—

“ I have been very unfortunate in some things. My education has, I fear, had a baneful influence on my character. My aunt, with the best intentions in the world, has completely spoilt me. Men ought to be hardy, active, and independent; she has brought me up to be delicate, indolent, and requiring constant attendance. I am not quite such an exotic as I used to be. . But it is only lately I discovered my laziness and my dependence. I am now going to enter on a course of discipline; I shall oblige myself to do everything for myself. There is nothing so painful to do, yet nothing so pleasurable when done, as to conquer a bad habit. I have often wished for some great sorrow, or great misfortune, that I might try my own powers of endurance and will.”

“ Oh, do not wish for sorrow, for if it gave you any pleasure, it would not be sorrow. And perhaps, if you did bear it, as you hope, it would only make you prouder.”

“ Prouder !” repeated Robert Clifden, and he

fell into thought. "Am I proud? I do not think so; I am never wilfully arrogant to my inferiors. I honour all men. I despise a tyrant of any kind as the most contemptible of creatures."

Rosa did not answer; but she had still a confused feeling that Robert Clifden was proud, though she had now begun to admire his character, and with the usual sensitiveness of her temperament, to desire to imitate him in what she admired.

"I, too, have faults," she said, "and one is an extreme sensitiveness to what everybody says and does. At home, I fear, I was spoilt by too much love, and now by comparison, things seem unkind, sometimes, when perhaps they are really the reverse."

This was said partly in apology. For a minute or two, Robert did not answer; then he said, as if to himself,

"Poor child!" His voice had never seemed before so soft and kind. He added, almost immediately, "I beg pardon."

"Oh do not beg my pardon. I am really a child in comparison with you. I am not seventeen, and you must be more than twenty."

"More than twenty—I am twenty-four; quite an old man," he said laughing. He then relapsed into his old manner, saying after a short pause, and with the same slight nervousness he had displayed in the beginning of their conversation;

"We are almost relations, Miss Grey. I should like if we could be friends."

Rosa's eyes brightened with gratification.

"When I say friends, I do not mean only that we should be on friendly terms, for that we are already, but on terms of friendship. Will you?"

"Gladly. I shall be so glad to have a friend."

"You will find me a true one. I am not what is called affectionate, and I cannot help it, for it is not my nature; but I am sincere, and friendship is in my opinion something much

more than a name. Depend upon mine at all times."

"Thank you," cried Rosa ; "I will and I do."

"I have only had one friend in the world besides yourself ;" he added gravely, "Distance separated us first, and then Death. Till lately, you will excuse me for saying so, I did not expect to meet with another, more especially of your sex."

"But I cannot be such a friend as your last. I am very young, and have learnt no languages, and know nothing of mathematics or science, or politics, though I should like to know."

"It is not in any acquirements, it is in the quality of the mind itself that a capacity for friendship exists, and its requirements are moral rather than intellectual, though I must say I have generally remarked that where the intellect is much contracted the moral feelings are apt to be the same. Learning, however, has nothing to do with friendship, except as a subject of mutual interest ; but there may be much greater and nobler subjects

of mutual interest, for instance the progress in ourselves and others of truth, knowledge and liberty. You, I know, have the same hopes, the same yearnings that I have."

Rosa looked up, pleased, but puzzled.

"I think I have, I hope I have," she answered; "but how do you know?"

Robert opened a book which lay on the table, and drew a small sheet of paper from between the leaves. Rosa coloured as she saw it covered with her own hand-writing.

"Do you remember," he said, "one night my meeting you in the corridor? I think it was the first of Miss Wills' visit?

"After you had gone, I found this sheet of paper, and seeing it contained only verses, I glanced at the first few lines, and was so much interested in them that I read to the end, quite unconscious till I reached the last verse, which contains some personal allusions, that they were your own. Had I supposed they were, I should not have read them without your permission. As it is, I trust you will excuse my saying that

I cannot but rejoice in a mistake which has made me acquainted with a character which I admire."

Rosa blushed and hesitated. She was surprised and gratified

"Do you really like it?" she cried; "I only wrote my own feelings. I did not suppose there was anything really clever in it."

"Of course you did not, or it would have been worthless. Sit down to write with the intention of being clever and fine, and failure is almost certain; sit down with the view of honestly and simply expressing your real sentiments and feelings, and you can hardly fail of producing something worth reading."

"Do you really think then that I possess some literary talent?" she asked eagerly.

"I will answer you as friend ought always to answer friend—with perfect candour. Your verses are the production of a pure, intelligent, vigorous, and enthusiastic mind, but they have not the originality and greatness of conception, nor the brilliancy of imagination which consti-

tute fine poetry. You write a thousand times better than a thousand people who try. You might doubtless insert your verses in newspapers and magazines, and many would say they were pretty and clever, and then forget them forever. The praise you might obtain would be sufficient to flatter your vanity, but you would neither do any real good nor obtain any."

Rosa's face fell as he spoke. He observed her change of countenance, and continued,

"I am truly grieved to vex you, but I cannot be instrumental in leading you on to disappointment."

"Then you think there is no chance of my making any money."

"Money!" he cried with some surprise.

"Do not think me avaricious!" cried Rosa; "but oh! if I could only feel that I was independent."

"That alters the case. Your ambition is right and noble, and I think you may possess the means of attaining it. Read, think, study, write, and in time you may write what is worth

reading, though hardly poetry. You will discover yourself in what direction your abilities tend."

"Then you think I ought not to send my verses to a magazine."

"There can be no harm in your doing so if you wish it. As your object is to adopt literature as a profession, the thing may lead to establishing a connection—not, however, that I know how these affairs are conducted. All I meant to say was, when you have attained all the fame that is possible by writing verses in periodical do not be disappointed by finding it is not worth having."

"No I will not," said Rosa, secretly believing, however, that it was quite worth having, and her ambition not a little roused by the conversation which had just passed.

A pause succeeded her last speech. With all the faith of youth in possibilities and in happiness, Rosa had fallen into a day-dream in which all her past sorrows and mortifications were forgotten—Riversthwaite, Mrs. Clifden, even

Robert himself were unremembered. She saw only a future in which esteem, affection, peace, and competence made up the picture. It pleased her to think how, in her happy little home, she might hear as from afar the sympathising voice of the world, and how another, perchance, might be proud and rejoice for her sake, as all her joy would be that she was more worthy of him.

"And now, Miss Grey," said Robert, "if I can help you in any way, you must promise to apply to me—to treat me, as you have promised, like a friend,"

Rosa smiled, coloured ingenuously, and said with some hesitation,

"You must treat me like a friend, too, and not like a ceremonious acquaintance. You used to call me Rosa; I do not see why you should become more ceremonious. It makes me fancy I have displeased you. It makes me feel like a stranger." Robert Clifden smiled and seemed pleased.

"I will call you Rosa, then, on one condition, and that is that you call me Robert."

"Oh but you are so much older than I am, and what would Mrs. Clifden say?" He laughed outright.

"I can afford to laugh at twenty-four at being called old. Do not, however, be alarmed about my aunt, I shall tell her it is at my earnest request you have been so good as to wave ceremony, and I promise you she will be quite satisfied. And now, Rosa, is it agreed?"

"Yes, Robert."

He nodded approvingly, and then left the room. Rosa remained behind, hardly knowing whether she was most surprised or pleased by the conversation which had just passed. She reproached herself bitterly for having hitherto so misjudged Robert Clifden, and made a wise resolution that henceforth to the end of her life she would judge of no one by his manner.

CHAPTER XV.

A FEW days after the conversation detailed in the previous chapter, Rosa was sitting alone with Mrs. Clifden when the latter informed her, with patronising approbation and in a manner as if she was half afraid that she might make her conceited by what she had to communicate, that she was very glad to be able to tell her that Robert approved very highly of her, that he thought she had good manners, good dispositions, and a lady-like deportment.

“ Robert,” continued his aunt, “ is of course the best possible judge, and as he is very fasti-

dious, his approbation is a very great compliment. I do not tell you this, Rosa, to make you vain, but because I hope it may be an encouragement to cultivate a becoming manner and an amiable temper. At your age, and situated as you are, it is impossible to be too modest and quiet—vanity in you would be altogether absurd ; and rely upon it, it is not only more becoming but much more likely to promote your success in life, to be humble and unassuming. Of course if you are married, and even with your disadvantages, if you behave as I advise, I do not think it at all impossible, the case would be different. A single woman, unless she has fortune and birth like Miss Cooper, is always nobody ; but a married one, even when her fortune and position are not very great, is always entitled to a certain degree of consideration.”

Rosa felt inclined to ask if the consideration in which persons were to be held did not in some measure depend upon their individual qualities ; but on second thoughts she considered it wiser to let the matter pass. She

began now to understand the utterly worldly, formal, narrow-minded, yet not unprincipled nor absolutely heartless character of her patroness. As she could not feel a very deep affection for her, and as she now understood that her behaviour towards herself was not from any personal dislike, but simply what she conceived to be most suitable to their respective situations, she was no longer mortified or pained by it.

With Robert's concurrence and assistance she selected from the midst of her numerous little versified manuscripts what they both agreed was the best of her attempts, and sent it to the —— Magazine.

"Oh," she said "I am so anxious."

"So anxious about such a trifle!"

"Ah! but it is no trifle to me. My future prospects may depend upon it."

"They may be influenced by it, my dear Rosa, doubtless, as our whole fate may frequently be influenced by the most minute actions of our lives; still your little poem may either be rejected or accepted, with no visible consequence

whatever, or the consequence may be of an altogether different kind from what you expect. None of us can even imagine, far less foresee consequences. And now send off your verses at once."

Rosa did as she was recommended. Robert told her to hope for no answer for several weeks, and should her verses be received, perhaps none at all except what might be conveyed in the fact of their being published. It was well he had told her this, as it relieved her mind from the misery of constant expectation, and daily disappointment.

She now began to be surprised that she did not hear of the return of Mr. Blakeney; but at last it was reported he had sprained his ankle, and been detained in Liverpool in consequence. Rosa's anxiety about her verses was now quite forgotten, in her anxiety for him; but Fanny Wills, with indefatigable and industrious sympathy, instantly set to work to find out all she could respecting him, and discovered by means of a friend in Liverpool, who was very intimate

with some friends of the Blakeneys, that Mr. Harold Blakeney's accident, though it might possibly prove tedious, was not at all of a serious nature. Rosa felt much comforted. The continuance of his absence, which had at first seemed a great evil, appeared easy to bear now that she was assured of his safety.

"I am so glad, dear Fanny—so much relieved."

"I am delighted, on your account, but it keeps you long separate."

"Oh, but when that is over it will not signify."

"I wish you had been formally engaged."

"So do I, and then he might have written to me."

"Yes; that would have been very nice: but it is not altogether on that account. Men are such fickle, incomprehensible creatures. I hope he may not meet with any one else at Liverpool to take his fancy."

Rosa felt at her heart a sudden chill, and the blood rushed in a warm tide all over her face

and neck. The bare idea which Fanny Wills had suggested, made her brain reel and her heart sick ; but after an instant's reflection she recovered, and answered with some indignation,

“ Oh, Fanny ! how can you speak so ? I am sure you are mistaken.”

“ I hope so, earnestly, dear Rosa, for your sake ; but many much handsomer women than you are, have been so served. I have had sad enough experience myself.”

“ Surely, Fanny, you do not imagine I rest my confidence on my own beauty, or merits ?”

“ I am sure I don't know, Rosa, then, what you do rest it on.”

“ On his goodness. He is too good and too noble, and too constant, to behave so.”

Fanny looked at Rosa with an expression which the latter did not quite understand. The truth was, Fanny was in a puzzle as to whether Rosa was acting, or whether she was the most romantic simpleton that ever existed on the face of the earth. After a little cogitation, she was induced to decide in favour of the former suppo.

sition. To a mind constructed after the worldly fashion of Fanny Wills', it appeared much more natural that even a young girl should be affected and high-flown, than that in the early flush of youth and beauty she should be humble in the appreciation of her own charms, or have a faith so unfaltering in the honour and constancy of the man she loved.

Fanny did not know that such trust was of the very essence of Rosa's affection, as it is of all affection in characters of a high class ; it is a sentiment, which, in really noble minds, intercourse even with the hard, selfish world, disappointment and ingratitude, can never altogether quench, as it is rooted in that firmest of all soils, a belief in the existence in others of the same nature as our own. Woe, indeed, to the man from whose breast it has vanished entirely ! The romance and the greatness of his life are alike over, to return no more for ever.

From that time forth, Fanny Wills, though she still liked Rosa better than any one with whom she was acquainted, and, though upon the whole,

she believed her more sincere than most persons, had a sort of half jealous, half envious, irritable sort of feeling towards her, which, though it would never have led her to do anything really prejudicial to her interest, was perpetually prompting her to make little worrying, detracting remarks, with the object of lessening, what she imagined to be Rosa's conceit, and proving to her that she was not so much more charming than other people—lost labour, for poor Rosa had never entertained such a supposition for a single instant. Indeed, the labour was worse than lost; as it had a direct tendency to promote the disease it was intended to cure.

Rosa first thought she must have offended or displeased Fanny; but when she found such was not the case, that the latter still expressed the same affection, nay, was still as unremitting in kindly acts as ever, the perception of the real cause dawned upon her. Two effects were thus produced, an extreme vexation at the littleness of mind displayed by one whom she had believed to be a friend, and a rather more confident

belief than she had ever felt before in the extent of her own attractions. Had she really been as little worthy of admiration as she had once supposed, Fanny, she thought, could never have thought it possible she could be vain.

One morning Rosa had come down to breakfast, which she rarely did before the gong sounded. As on the first morning after her arrival at Riversthwain she found herself alone in the breakfast-room with Robert Clifden. This, however, she considered, now in the light of a pleasant rather than a disagreeable accident.

It was a morning early in March, very cold for the season, the earth frozen as hard as iron and the sky cloudless and blue. The winter, after a brief glimpse of spring, had returned. The incipient buds of the approaching season shrank, nipped and blighted; the wild fruits of the earlier winter, the berries and the haws, were all gone. The poor little birds flew about beneath the bright, unfriendly sky from one bare branch to another, or alighted on the ice-bound

streams and the frozen earth, and found all alike inhospitable. Warmth, food, or shelter, there were none. Robert Clifden was standing at an open window, and, with a large slice of bread in his hand, which he had cut from a loaf on the table, was busy crumbling and strewing it on the paved step outside.

"Good morning, Rosa," he said in his usual cheerful, polite, undemonstrative tone, "I would shake hands, but you see I am busy," and he industriously went on with his employment. Having returned his salutation, Rosa found some interest, in watching him. Having scattered the crumbs, he withdrew behind the window curtain, and seemed to regard with interest the large party of feathered guests which quickly collected to partake of his bounty. Rosa felt some interest in watching them too, but more in observing the countenance and gestures of their entertainer. She had never before seen Robert look so animated or so benign. It seemed to afford him infinite amusement to watch the eagerness, the jealousies, the conten-

tions of his winged company, while in the most benevolent manner he threw more food towards those whom their rivals had excluded from the repast he had already provided, and seemed almost tenderly solicitous that the smaller and weaker ones should not go without their share. It exhibited, Rosa thought, his character in a new and pleasing aspect.

"How fond you are of birds!" was the spontaneous expression of her sympathy and approbation. Shutting the window, he turned towards her, saying with a composed smile, and in a calm, yet pleasant tone,

"Fond! I hardly know what you mean by fond. I have a degree of good-will towards these birds. I wish them no ill, but rather good, and I consider it the very height of cruelty to let any living creature perish of hunger, while one has food in abundance to bestow. But all this is not fondness, and if I have any glimmer of the real meaning of the word, as I have heard it described, and once or twice have witnessed what I have been told were its effects, I believe it is quite foreign to my nature."

"I cannot believe it is foreign to the nature of any one who has a heart—perhaps in you circumstances have not called it forth." As she spoke, she looked at him with a sort of affectionate compassion. Robert was still standing by the window, but some sudden impulse sent him across the room where Rosa was now sitting in the corner of a sofa. He said, with more warmth of tone than usual;

"I wish I were fond of something. It seems to me as if it must be a pleasant sensation. Tell me, Rosa, whether it is pleasanter to be fond of some one or to have some one fond of us."

Rosa laughed. "You must be a judge," she said, "of the latter sensation, for your aunt, I am sure, is very fond of you."

"Fond! I know she has an altogether undeserved partiality for me—a partiality for which, grateful though I am, I am well aware I am not, and never can be grateful enough; but my aunt's love for me, though in her heart I believe it is as strong, perhaps, as any love could

be, does not express itself in—she is not the sort of person according to my idea of fondness."

"Then you have an idea of fondness."

"It would appear that I have an incipient one springing up in my understanding."

"In your understanding?"

"Yes; just as one has an idea of what a man condemned to death for murder must feel the night before his execution, though one has never experienced, nor is in the least likely to experience, such a sensation. But you have never answered my question as to whether it is pleasanter to be the subject or the object of fondness."

"I do not think one could be satisfied with being either separately. The pleasure is incomplete unless we are both."

"True—true—of course. I wonder how I could ask such a question. I wonder if it often happens thus fortunately."

"Generally I should think. It seems to me hardly possible to help being fond of those who show fondness for us."

"Indeed!" cried Robert with animation, and as he spoke he very gently and very kindly stroked the curls of her soft, dark hair. She looked up with pleasant surprise. She was glad that Robert liked her.

As he met her grateful smile, a faint expression of embarrassment passed over his features. He withdrew his hand, and as persons frequently do when they are a little nervous, he made a random remark on the first object he saw—

"That is a fine brilliant in your ring. I suppose it was your mamma's?"

It was now Rosa's turn to be embarrassed.

"No—I did not—I got it in a present." Then she added, in a steadier voice, but with a much more heightened colour, "Mr. Blakeney gave it to me the night before he left home."

Robert visibly started; but his countenance did not change. It continued calm and pale. He made no response, but appeared to wait for her to go on. She continued—

"I have wished for some weeks to tell you about it, Robert. I am so young and inexperi-

enced, and know so little of the world, and I feel you are so truly my friend. Do you think I ought to have received a present?"

"That depends on circumstances, my dear Rosa," he answered in an unmoved but gentle tone. "Since you have honoured—I mean entrusted me with your confidence, may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly you may."

"Did you then consider Mr. Blakeney an admirer when he gave you this! I mean, did you believe him to be a suitor for your hand?"

"I fancied so—but perhaps it was my own vanity."

"Your own vanity—nonsense, you could not think anything else if you thought at all; but you are young, and I fancied might be thoughtless. That is what I meant. But before I answer your question, I must further enquire if Mr. Blakeney is a favoured suitor?"

"Rosa's deep blush, her visible tremor, her averted countenance were answer enough. For a second or two both were silent, then Robert

Clifden continued in the same placid tone, and with nearly all his old iciness of manner, which though his words were kind, made Rosa almost regret that she had consulted him,

“ As such appears to be the state of the affair my dear Rosa, it seems to me, who am neither, however, a man of the world, nor one at all versed in the etiquette of *affaires de cœur*, but judge only from the natural light of my understanding, that there can be nothing wrong in your accepting a present from a favoured lover. May I ask if you have been long engaged to Mr. Blakeney.”

Rosa coloured more painfully than before,

“ I do not know exactly—that is, I always fancied after what had passed—I always considered myself engaged in honour—the same as if a formal promise had passed between us; but Miss Wills says if I were not so young, and if I knew anything of the world, I should not think so”—

“ And what did pass? Tell me, my dear girl. Trust me always.”

The coldness had left his tone, Only the gentleness and calmness remained. Rosa feeling comforted and encouraged, related what had passed. Robert answered :

“ If Miss Wills knew what the best part of the world, what all men and women who deserve the name, consider right and true, she would know that you ought both to consider yourselves as much engaged as if the most solemn vow had passed between you. I regret, my dear Rosa, you have been so hasty ; but I would not for the world, as I have nothing to say against Mr. Blakeney’s character or principles, I would not on any account say anything that would induce you to suppose your course still free. You have both, somewhat imprudently, I do think, bound yourselves ; but all I shall now say to you, Rosa, is, may God bless you evermore !”

He spoke solemnly, almost sadly. Rosa was much affected ; but a little vexed that he should think her imprudent, and not altogether pleased at the tone in which he spoke

of Mr. Blakeney. After a pause she said with some spirit,

"I cannot think, Robert, that I am imprudent. There is everything to justify my choice."

"As I said before, Harold Blakeney's character is unexceptionable. He is handsome, and has what women consider agreeable manners,—all-sufficient reasons with your sex—therefore, perhaps, I was wrong in saying you have been imprudent. Few people are more so in their marriages. I only meant, there are not many persons I should consider worthy of you."

"Oh, if that is all—I only wish I were more worthy of him."

"Poor child!" said Robert compassionately; and then he added, "You ought to tell my aunt. It is right."

"I know it; but I cannot—I am afraid—I do not like. Perhaps you will be so good."

"I will; and here she comes."

"Oh, not before me," cried Rosa entreatingly.

He promised ; and whispered as Mrs. Clifden entered the room—

"Do not be alarmed, there is no danger of my aunt's being displeased."

CHAPTER XV.

As soon as breakfast was over, Robert Clifden withdrew to his private sitting-room.

It was at once a luxurious and a literary apartment; it was not large, but very lofty; the shape was nearly square, with two windows which looked out on the broad, grassy avenue, or lawn it might almost have been denominated. Two sides of the room were covered entirely by bookshelves, filled with volumes in handsome bindings. A soft, thick carpet covered the floor; soft damask draperies and venetian blinds shaded the windows. A most inviting sofa

stood beneath the bookshelves, while a *very* easy chair was placed in front of a handsome writing table, covered with books and papers. A clear fire blazed brightly in a grate of polished steel, while over the chimney piece hung some fine engravings in plain but handsome frames.

It was Robert's custom to seat himself at the writing table immediately on entering the room after breakfast, and read or write for some hours; but this morning he wandered up and down the floor in an absent manner, and when he, at last, sat down and drew his volume before him, it was in vain he attempted to fix his attention. At last, with a gesture of impatience, he shoved away the book, and rising, walked to the window.

"What a fool I am!" he said to himself. "How little one knows of oneself. I did not imagine I was capable of such inconceivable folly. And to begin to be fond too—yes, *fond* is the word—just when fondness is vain. But so much the better. Yet I wish she had not thrown herself away on that puppy Blakeney."

Here Robert paused in his soliloquy; his face assuming, after a minute or two, an expression partly amused, partly contemptuous.

"Am I actually jealous?" he asked himself. "I used to think Harold Blakeney a very passable sort of fellow—not her equal though. An inferior woman would have suited him better. I shall lose my friend. What then?"

Robert reseated himself, took out his journal, or rather a note-book in which he was in the habit of writing down any thought which appeared to him worthy of being preserved for the benefit of himself or others, and inscribed—

"Friendship with women is impossible. Either it degenerates into a less worthy sentiment, or you lose your friend by her falling in love, as it is called, with some other man. No woman, however great and noble and unworldly the thoughts she may conceive, is capable of sacrificing her personal affections to them; and the love of what belongs to ourselves is a low and unworthy feeling in comparison with a lofty passion for truth, and a determination to devote

oneself, heart and brain, to the civilisation of mankind. I thank Providence, which has not permitted me to sink thus beneath myself. I take my present feelings as a warning to guard more sedulously against a weakness, of which till now I did not believe myself capable, and I resolve to waste upon thinking of this foolish business no more mind and no more time."

Here Robert Clifden laid down his pen, drew back his book, and for the space of an hour did not once raise his eyes from its pages. History sayeth not, whether he was as successful as usual in digesting the materials of his mental meal.

During the whole day, Rosa never entered Mrs. Clifden's presence without feeling nervous, and dreading that the latter might speak on the formidable subject. Nothing remarkable, however, was to be discerned in her mien all day. She said nothing, and behaved in her usual calm and stately manner. But the next day, when Rosa came into the drawing-room before

dinner she perceived through all Mrs. Clifden's dignity that she had been told.

"Rosa, my dear," she said, looking up from her work as the latter entered the room, a slight smile breaking through the composure of her features, "come and sit beside me here. I want to speak to you on a subject of some importance to yourself." Rosa complied with Mrs. Clifden's request, amazed to find herself invited to occupy part of a luxurious, cushioned ottoman.

"I have just heard some good news about you from Robert; but before I go further on the subject, I must remark that I am rather surprised at your consulting a young man on such an affair instead of myself, who, from my age and sex would seem to be better calculated for your adviser, not to mention that as your guardian it was my due."

The displeasure of Mrs. Clifden had never appeared so little formidable to her protégé as at this moment. Indeed the former appeared to say what she did rather from a sense

of propriety than that she was really displeased. Mrs. Clifden was not prone to take offence. She was too thoroughly convinced of her own importance to imagine that any one could think of slighting her, and she was too much pleased at present with Rosa's good behaviour in having contrived to attract an eligible admirer, to be very hard on any minor delinquency. In her embarrassment, too, Rosa stumbled on the very excuses best calculated to propitiate her.

“I—I did not like to consult you till—till—I should, if he had written to me or—and Mr. Robert is so kind, and somehow accident led to the subject, and I felt so thoroughly I could trust him.”

“Of course, Rosa. I allow your excuse. Robert is quite different from any other young man, and as he takes an interest in you, it was not as if you were teasing him. He is really quite taken up with this affair, which is a great compliment, as usually, of course, he looks upon such things as quite beneath his notice.

And now I must tell you, Rosa, how much pleased I am with you for having chosen so creditably. Mr. Blakeney is a very respectable young man, and respectably connected. His position as a clergyman is such, that without derogating from our own station Robert and I can be on terms of relationship with you. It is a better match than with your disadvantages of fortune and position you could possibly have expected. Of course this connection will bring him the advantage of our more immediate notice and patronage, which doubtless he counts among the advantages of the match. And, indeed, it may be considered a pretty equal match, taking that into the question, and that your manner and appearance, though they have not the dignity and elegance of Miss Cooper, for instance, are certainly the manners of a gentlewoman. In fact, Rosa, I consider your style altogether just what is adapted for a country clergyman's wife. And now, my dear, you may go at present."

Rosa went, glad to have got over it so well, but inwardly indignant at the tone in which Mrs.

Clifden had spoken of Mr. Blakeney. For herself she did not mind. It was pleasant, however, to think that Robert had a different opinion of her. As she felt more and more, even through all Mrs. Clifden's goodwill and intended kindness that he could never love, or be in sympathy with her, so she drew nearer to her nephew in gratitude and affection. She tried to show her sense of his kindness in every possible way ; she would have run for his books, and rung the bell for him, if he would have permitted her, but he absolutely refused such services, and in such a way, that Rosa felt it would offend and displease him to offer them again.

In the meantime, the little glow of manner which he had exhibited when their compact of friendship was first formed, had died away, and he had become the same gentle icicle as before, except that he treated Rosa more as an equal. Rosa felt that he had by degrees become less agreeable, but she could not forget the glimpse she had had of his character. She felt sure that whatever he might be at other times, he was a friend in

need. She felt sure also, that from what he had said to her about marriage, he would not marry Miss Cooper. She did not think he would marry at all, as there was not the slightest probability of his ever being in love. If he ever were, it would probably be with somebody of the same cold, just, noble, rather stoical way of thinking as himself. For want of some one else to speak to probably, Rosa communicated her opinions on this subject to Fanny Wills. The latter by no means agreed with her.

“Whatever you may say, Rosa, you may depend upon it Robert Clifden, though he is not in love, admires and will marry Louisa Cooper. She is the best match in the county ; and even you allow he will never fall in love, and what else but another attachment is likely to prevent him from doing what is so manifestly for his advantage, when it is so evidently in his power.”

“I said I did not think Robert Clifden would ever fall in love, but at the same time I am certain he will never marry for money. He is not

at all mercenary. He has not one mercenary idea." Rosa spoke with warmth.

But Fanny Wills only shook her head and looked incredulous.

"When you know the world as well as I do, Rosa, you will know that people only marry from two motives—love and interest. What other indeed could they marry from?"

"I think," said Rosa laughing, "Robert will marry from sense and principle. I think he will marry some one who agrees with him in his opinions, and is suited to him in age and position. I feel almost certain he would rather marry a woman who had no money."

Fanny Wills looked almost contemptuous. She did not believe that Rosa, even young as she was, could really be so wanting in understanding as to think as she spoke. She said no more, however, on the subject.

At last it was known in Riversthwaite and Ellerdale that Mr. Blakeney was quite well and about to return, and also that his mother and a sister would return with him. One heart in

the parish at least beat fast and high as this intelligence was made public—beat with mingled joy and apprehension, but the joy was generally uppermost. Rosa longed to see Mrs. Blakeney. She had heard so much of her from her son. She had formed in her own mind a delightful picture of her loveable, motherly, affectionate character. She trusted Mrs. Blakeney would like her; but Harold's mother must surely love her for his sake. And Miss Blakeney too. She wondered if it were his favourite sister—the Matilda of whom she had often heard him speak, and whom he had once or twice hinted he thought resembled her in character.

It was very exciting to poor Rosa, and strange to say, Robert Clifden seemed to perceive and to understand that it was so, for he sought to provide her with occupation, brought books for her to read, and talked to her more than he had done for some little time.

One morning Rosa was practising on the old piano in the lumber-room when she heard a

gentle tap at the door. Having called out, "Come in," she was somewhat surprised to see Robert Clifden enter. He brought a letter and a magazine in his hand. He seemed on the point of speaking as he entered the room, but suddenly paused, and exclaimed,

"What a wretched, uncomfortable place! is it possible you have been sitting here all this time? Why cannot you play on the piano in the drawing-room, if you must play?"

"Mrs. Clifden thinks, and indeed it would spoil the drawing-room piano, to play in this way on it. And besides, it is not very agreeable to hear people practising."

"At any rate, this room ought to be made comfortable for you; and to have no fire in this cold weather! I hope you had a good one when it was so very cold."

Rosa did not answer. Robert's pale face became for a moment almost red, and his blue eye lighted up. Without speaking, he rang the bell. It was not answered immediately, and he rang it again with some vehemence. The sum-

mons was responded to by a housemaid, somewhat surprised, and a little displeased. No footman would have condescended to appear in that room.

“Why is there no fire here?” asked Robert Clifden, in a calm, decided, yet not angry tone, “and why is this room in such disorder?” The housemaid was rather a pert damsel.

“No orders, sir, has been given for a fire, nor to do the room neither.”

“Orders are surely not necessary, to keep tidy all the rooms in the house that are inhabited by any part of the family. Put on a fire instantly, and every day, till you are ordered by Miss Grey to discontinue it.” Then noticing a slight toss of the girl’s head as she left the room, he added, “See that you do not forget, or it may cost you your place.”

Astonished at such unwonted energy in a person who hardly ever gave an order, or troubled himself in the smallest degree about any household affairs whatever, Jane vanished from the room, saying something to herself in an under-

tone. The same day at dinner she communicated her opinion to the party in the servants' hall, that master was certainly courting Miss Grey, for she had never seen him so attentive to anybody before, and he was so angry at her not having a fire; and "to think of his being alone with her in the lumber-room!"

"Jane," said Mrs. Springer, "I wonder to hear you talk in that way. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, as if master would ever demean himself to marry such as Miss Grey—a young person taken as one may say out of charity."

"Mrs. Springer," said Watkins, "Miss Grey is own niece to our late master, and for my part I think," he continued oracularly, "Mr. Robert might do worse. Your sex, Mrs. Springer, is no judge of these matters, and if I were master I would rather marry a sweet, pretty, well-mannered young lady like Miss Grey, than that proud, disagreeable minx, Miss Cooper, that always speaks to one as if one was a black nigger, and not the butler and confiden-

tial servant of a lady like Mrs. Clifden of Rivers-thwaite."

"And I should recommend you, Mr. Watkins," said Mrs. Springer, who headed one party in the servants' hall, while Watkins headed another, "not to make such comparisons, or you may find it the worse for you one of these days."

"I am obliged to you, Mrs. Springer, for your advice; but I am arrived at years of discretion, and flatter myself that I know the politics of a family of condition as well as Mrs. Springer can teach me."

Mrs. Springer made no answer, but mentally resolved after considering the matter over, to put her mistress on her guard. She was induced to think, on consideration, there was some truth in Jane's surmise, it was so unlike Mr. Robert Clifden's general style of proceeding; and it seemed, moreover, so probable to Mrs. Springer's astute and scheming mind, that Rosa should try for so great a match. By playing the part of informer, she hoped to ingratiate herself with her mistress, and to in-

jure Rosa, whom she cordially detested as a sort of rival in Mrs. Clifden's favour, and as raised above herself, in the estimation of society, whereas in Mrs. Springer's opinion, she was "no better," that is, no richer. Warily she began the subject by remarking—

"Miss Grey had got quite well again, and was looking very well."

Mrs. Clifden was in a gracious humour, and in that bending mood which was sometimes the concomitant of her being undressed, as if she somewhat laid aside her dignity with her robes, or kept it more especially for the state apartments. She therefore responded graciously to Mrs. Springer's remark. The latter continued,

"Miss Grey all at once, ma'am, seems quite the grown-up young lady, and quite, if I may say so, ma'am, a belle among the gentlemen."

No answer from Mrs. Clifden, but she continued to look gracious almost to smile.

Mrs. Springer hardly knew whether to take her manner as a good omen or not. If it

indicated, as it almost seemed to do, favour towards Rosa, perhaps it might not be quite safe to proceed ; still there was the more need for the attempt.

“ Mr. Clifden, ma’am, seems to think a good deal of Miss Grey.”

“ Yes ; your master and I are both much interested in her. She is very much improved, and as you say, Springer, much admired. She is a very sensible and excellent young lady.”

“ I am very glad you think so, ma’am, as to be sure, ma’am, you must be the best judge.”

“ Of course I am, Springer ; and your master is exactly of the same opinion.”

“ So I thought, ma’am,” said Springer, thoughtfully and with some hesitation. “ Miss Grey, to be sure, ma’am, has a very winning way. Master certainly does admire her very much, and of course, master being so dutiful a nephew, and Miss Grey such an excellent young lady, all that they do must be with your approbation. I beg pardon, ma’am, for being so bold, but an old and attached servant, such as I

am, feels such an interest in such a mistress as you, ma'am, that it almost leads me, sometimes, to forget my place, and to see things that such as I am should not see."

While Mrs. Springer had been speaking, her mistress' face had continued to become more and more haughty and impenetrable. It relaxed, however, a little, as the former concluded with such expressions of attachment and humility. Mrs. Clifden answered with dignified, yet forgiving, reproof.

"Springer, I have no recollection of your having ever before so far forgotten yourself, and therefore, for once, I overlook it. Though my astonishment is greater than I can express, I can hardly avoid guessing at what you mean, and I am perfectly certain neither your master nor Miss Grey could so far forget themselves or their respective stations; and you, too, Mrs. Springer will, I trust, remember yours for the future."

"Oh, ma'am," cried Springer, inwardly consumed with rage, yet glad to perceive that

Mrs. Clifden did not at least *approve* of any connexion between her nephew and Rosa, but only disbelieved in it. “I am sure I beg ten thousand pardons, it was all my zeal for you, ma’am; and though I am sure Miss Grey is a very nice young lady, I thought she was of course no match for master, and young people, ma’am, will sometimes not be so prudent as they should be. I meant nothing against Miss Grey, ma’am, I only thought for her own sake—she is so young ma’am. I beg ten thousand pardons, ma’am.”

“Springer, I do justice to your attachment and that induces me to forgive the liberty you have taken; but I trust such a thing may never occur again. Miss Grey I have no doubt will form an alliance in every way suitable to her position, and though she is so young, she has much more good sense than to dream of lifting her eyes so high above herself. As for your master, I cannot suppose you could imagine for a moment that he would ever derogate from his dignity even by what people call flirting with a

young lady under my protection. I condescend to say all this to you, Springer, because I have complete confidence in your regard for myself and for the honour of my family, feeling that it will be quite sufficient to prevent you from ever meddling again with matters which are quite out of your sphere and above your comprehension, and also that in case any of the lower domestics should in their ignorance take any similar folly into their heads, you may at once put a stop to any notion so derogatory to your master's dignity and so prejudicial to Miss Grey."

"Thank you, ma'am. I am sure, ma'am, I beg pardon, but as you say, ma'am, it was all my ignorance of high life, and partly owing to Jane, the under-housemaid, who was telling all the servants in the hall at dinner that master had been beside Miss Grey all the morning in the lumber-room, and that he had rung the bell and got quite into a passion with Jane because there was no fire, though you had given no orders, ma'am."

To Mrs. Springer's surprise, even this information made no impression on her mistress. She was so thoroughly prepossessed with the idea that Robert wished Rosa to marry Mr. Blakeney, and with a belief which had been long firmly rooted in her mind, that he had as much dignity as herself, that she did not give Springer's suggestion one single serious thought, and was wounded only that any one should have dared to make it; though too proud to show the wound. She answered—

"Miss Grey is as great a favourite of my nephew's as she is of mine, and of course they both feel that their respective positions ought to be sufficient to shield them from all tittle-tattle. As to my nephew, he is so full of kindness for everyone, that no one need have been surprised at his ordering a fire, which I wish I had thought of for Miss Grey before now. And now, Springer, you may go for the night."

Springer withdrew, mortified and puzzled and with more spiteful feelings than ever towards Rosa, who was evidently high in her mis-

tress's favour, and considered as much above Springer as she was beneath Mr. Robert Clifden. She was astonished too at her mistress's blindness, and enraged at the foolish pride which she believed to be the sole cause of it, and quite miserable at the possibility of Rosa's being one day Mrs. Robert Clifden.

"Missus," she said to herself, "may come to repent her high mightiness one of these days and to wish she had taken Springer's advice, though she does meddle with matters above her sphere. Well! her pride will get a fall at any rate, if I cannot prevent that minx from making a conquest of the nephew."

But I must return to Robert Clifden and Rosa, whom I left tête-à-tête in the lumber-room.

Jane could hardly have been more surprised at Robert's appearance than Rosa was herself. She was also a little frightened by his vehemence about the fire, and kept protesting that she did not wish—did not need one. But he finally put a stop to her protestations.

"I see, Rosa, you are afraid lest my aunt should be displeased, but I can assure you, your alarm is groundless. I am quite certain my aunt wishes you to be comfortable in the first place, and in the second she kindly permits me to order what I please in her house. She will not find fault, but if she did, I should refuse from henceforth to take the discredit of acting as master of a house, in which the comfort of my guests was not attended to as much as my own."

Robert spoke with energy and resolution, and Rosa made no further resistance, for she felt that in his circumstances she would have acted as he did. After a second's pause, he again began—

"And now to speak of something more agreeable. I have got a pleasant surprise for you, Rosa." As he spoke, he placed the open magazine before her, and she saw—yes, actually, her own verses in print! Her heart bounded with joyful surprise. The blood rushed to her face. She seemed in a dream. Her own

thoughts, her very words in print! She could not read them though. She could hardly see them, or at least only just sufficiently to be certain of their identity. But all who have ever written know the first extraordinary, bewildering, delightful sensation of seeing one's thoughts in print—a sensation which in its full intensity can only be felt once, as every repetition wears out the impression, and about the third or fourth time it is lost altogether.

Robert watched Rosa's varying countenance for some minutes, for the time almost forgetting what had brought him there. Then appearing to recollect himself, he said with a smile partly of amusement, partly of admiration, and altogether of kindness,

“I have had a letter too from the editor of the magazine in answer to the one I wrote at your request when I sent the verses, in which he says he will be happy to insert more.”

It was a new kind of pleasure to Robert to see Rosa's face brighten. He had often thought of the satisfaction he should experience, if he

should ever confer any benefit on society ; and he had been in the habit of considering the pleasure derived from the mere pleasing another without benefitting him, as a sort of vanity which a noble mind ought utterly to despise.

Why was it that he was so happy at this moment ? Why was it that Rosa's happy face and eager, warm delight, seemed to give him more pleasure than anything had ever done before ? He was angry with himself, and was determined neither to feel nor to look happy ; he strove hard and with success, to regain his ordinary coldness and composure. Rosa felt the change, and was confirmed in her old opinion that he was a being of ice, whom, though she must always admire and like, she could never love, for in the very moment when her heart sprang towards him with ardent gratitude, his manner chilled its fervour and repressed its expression into the mere forms of common politeness. She stopped herself in the middle of pouring out all her feelings, and felt very glad she had done so, as instead of encouraging her to go on he said,

"And now I shall leave you to enjoy your letter and your magazine. Only, remember, if I can aid you to select from your verses, I am always ready."

He went, and Rosa ran to her own room to read over and over again the curt, business-like letter which had given her so much pleasure, stealing also occasionally a glance at her own *printed* verses. And then Rosa fell into a reverie.

When she looked up, her face was bright and cheerful. Evidently her thoughts had been of the happiest.

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